

The background of the cover is dark gray. Overlaid on it are two large, white, stylized human figures. The figure on the left is a simple outline of a person with a small, five-petaled flower-like symbol on its head. The figure on the right is more complex, with elongated, flame-like or leaf-like extensions from its torso and limbs, and a similar flower-like symbol at its base. The title is printed in large, bold, black capital letters across the center of the figures.

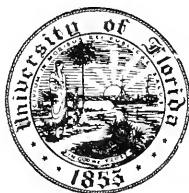
# PSYCHOLOGICAL COUNSELING OF ADOLESCENTS

Edited by  
Raymond J. Steimel, Ph.D.

The Catholic University of America Press  
Washington, D. C.  
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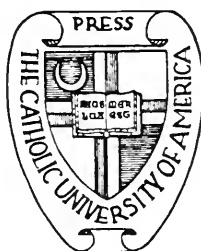
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# **PSYCHOLOGICAL COUNSELING OF ADOLESCENTS**

(The Proceedings of the Workshop on Psychological  
Counseling of Adolescents, conducted at The  
Catholic University of America,  
June 16 to June 27, 1961.)

**Edited by**

**Raymond J. Steimel, Ph.D.**



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## FOREWORD

These Proceedings represent the fourth in a series of workshops conducted by the Department of Psychology and Psychiatry at The Catholic University of America as part of a program to improve the guidance and counseling services in both our public and private schools. In previous years, special attention was given to the critical stages of organization and administration of a guidance program and even to basic interviewing techniques needed in our counseling programs. The present workshop goes beyond this and focuses on methods of understanding and on techniques of working with one specific age group -- the adolescent. It will be noted throughout that the emphasis has been more on the normal adolescent with whom the teacher or counselor has numerous everyday contacts than with the abnormal individual who has demanded so much attention recently.

The topics presented here were selected to furnish the participant with a well-rounded picture of the psychological aspects of the world of the adolescent. Special attention has been given to the home, the school, and the society in which the teenager of today must grow to maturity. Techniques of working with adolescents have also been given in many of the lectures; however, these techniques were discussed more extensively in the afternoon seminar and practicum sessions. The seminars were devoted to a discussion of problems arising from the morning presentations as well as cases introduced by the participants. The practicums focused rather on role playing and the evaluations of recordings made in counseling interviews with adolescents.

Since the seminars and practicums dealt with problems existing in particular schools, and since the large number of participants necessitated so many groups, it would be extremely difficult, if not impossible, to include any meaningful summary. Seminar summaries were given to each of the participants during the workshop.

Special appreciation is here extended to Dr. Antanas Suziedelis, assistant director of the workshop, as well as the rest of the staff members of the Department of Psychology and Psychiatry, Dr. John Kinnane and Dr. Richard Youniss for their help both in planning and in conducting the workshop. Likewise, I am deeply indebted to Brother Austin Dondero, F.S.C., Brother John Egan, F.S.C.H., Dr. Durand Jacobs, Sister Maurice McManama, S.C., Sister Marian Dolores Robinson, S.N.J.M., and Father Carroll Tageson, O.F.M., who gave freely of their time in the seminar and practicum sessions.

Raymond J. Steimel, Ph.D.



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## PART I

### PRESENTATION OF MAIN TOPICS



## ADOLESCENCE, THE PRELUDE TO MATURITY

by

Very Reverend John W. Stafford, C.S.V.

In eternal granite over the portals of the Archives Building in Washington is the sentence: "The past is prelude." The sentence has a timeless, granite ring, the expression of the sort of self-evident, eternal truth that is beyond challenge or controversy. All that has gone before is prelude to all that comes after for the simple reason that it has gone before. It is difficult to be more elemental or obvious.

So also the title of this paper, "Adolescence, the Prelude to Maturity," must be taken for granted by everyone except perhaps certain hyper-experienced teenagers who consider themselves already mature (and in some senses really are), and who regard everyone beyond twenty-five as in fairly advanced senescence.

Yes, adolescence is the prelude to maturity!

Meaning is put into the title by a phrase in the descriptive material of the workshop brochure: "Adolescence is the 'finishing' period in the growth of personality."

I am seemingly mouthing only harmlessly bland clichés. But actually I have already plunged into an extensive controversy, and have taken a position -- in fact several positions. These positions can rather easily be summarized into two. The first position is an assertion. To say that adolescence is the prelude to maturity, that it is the finishing period in the growth of personality, is a ringing assertion hurled at the genitalists, the phallicists, the oralists, the analysts -- and I cannot resist saying at most of the older analysts -- who in theory at least are required to say that personality is rather completely determined by the age of six, or three, or even one. These theorists would admit that the impact of later experience does something to personality, but they insist that it does not do much. There is an abundant source of analogi-

cal truth or half-truth available for the protagonists of such positions. A mustard seed develops not into an oak or elm but into a mustard tree. A grape seed does not change its entelechy and decide to become a grapefruit. The apple will develop into nothing else but an apple; you may bruise it, you may polish it, so that it will become less or more attractive, but its essence of apple will remain unchanged and unchangeable. So also, that anything of much consequence happens to the personality during adolescence that was not in the Anlagen all along, is similarly denied.

The second position is a denial that personality goes on being significantly changed, formed, and reformed, right on through life; a denial that there is anything more characteristic about adolescence in determining personality than there is about the thirties, the forties, the sixties, or the seventies. Those who insist that personality goes right on changing are labeled "environmentalists;" they hold that the changing milieu in which personality happens to find itself produces changes in personality. Many of the world's optimists are in this camp: the fiancée who is sure she can reform her alcoholic boyfriend once she can manipulate his environment as his wife; the mistress of novices, or master of novices, who is sure the neurotic postulant will blossom into beautifully mature holiness once the convent door is shut against the world.

There would be little point for this workshop if there were not something determining about adolescence in the development of personality. The psychological counseling of adolescents, as distinct from merely educational or vocational counseling, implies that there can be some important modification of personality effected through psychological manipulation. But there is no need to go monolithic and deny that all other periods of life are important for personality development. It would seem today beyond dispute that early childhood is of paramount importance in laying down the basic personality structure one will carry through life. Hence, programs of prevention of personality disorders should begin with the earliest years, or more properly with the parents themselves, who are overwhelmingly the most significant influences in these early years, and, therefore, in the eventual emergence of a mature personality. And it is also true that personalities



can become modified in important ways after childhood and after adolescence. The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius have changed forty-year-old reprobates into saints. Traumatic experiences of various kinds, loss of limb, death of one close and dear, reverses in fortune, have produced profound changes. Are these really changes in the basic structure of the personality, or only in surface traits? Perhaps ultimately no one can ever really determine since our knowledge of what is source and what is surface will always be vague and tenuous. But behavior does change, people do act differently in important ways, they become better adjusted or more maladjusted, they function better or worse from the point of view of numerous, non-controverted standards. People, then, change. Even mistresses of novices can occasionally make the neurotic postulant less observably neurotic, and the over-optimistic bride can make her alcoholic groom noticeably less obnoxious. The trouble is, neurotics can become more neurotic, even in convents, and alcoholics can degenerate into just plain drunks.

Adolescence, then, following the major assumptions of this paper, is a focal point of considerable importance in the growth of personality. In the psychological counseling of adolescents, there should be emphasis on the definitive formation personality is taking at this time, with appropriate treatment where indicated to arrest and rechannel maladjustive tendencies.

I generally find it helpful in a serious paper of this sort, before a group seriously interested in knowledge for action, to attempt to present a theoretical framework that will be useful for organizing and systematizing our knowledge, so that it can be used more effectively in action programs in our counseling settings. I am sure many of you in your experience have developed more sound and useful "do's" and "don't's" than I could give. I would like to suggest a conceptual framework for these technical "do's" and "don't's."

The period of adolescence, which for our purposes here we can conveniently bound by the high school years (although this is arbitrary), is a period of development of power. There are many useful concepts of maturity. The one being used here is that maturity is characterized by the develop-

ment, mobilization, and coordination of the various powers of the individual for effective action.

In adolescence there is the obvious burst of physical power. In boys it often is almost sheer brute force; in girls it is a physical energy and stamina that for sustained endurance and intensity often rivals and surpasses that of many boys. This can be seen quite typically at a teen-age dance, where girls often wear their partners to a frazzle. In boys, athletic prowess is the symbol of this physical development, especially in our age of the glorification of athletics, but it can also be seen in the feats of physical work late-adolescent boys can perform. You will learn more of all this from the workshop's expert on physiological aspects of adolescence, Dr. Heald.

The most dramatic development in adolescence is, of course, that of the sexual powers. Your experts, Father Sattler and Doctor McGovern, will consider with you special problems in this area. Sex is too often magnified, as I am sure you have heard before and shall probably hear often during these workshop days, as the only truly characteristic change of adolescence. To many it is the most obvious change, involving as it does patently observable changes in physique, and changes in behavior directly observed or reasonably inferred that are striking and, of course, of momentous consequences. When one passes from a purely anatomical and physiological view of sex to the domain of the psychosexual, there can again be no question of the profound modifications the personality is undergoing. It is perhaps this psychosexual aspect, with all its erotic overtones in attitudes, interests, ideals, and values, that has caused sexual development to be regarded as overwhelmingly the most characteristic change of this period. There is thus loosed at this time a new power, perhaps better called procreative than sexual, since there is a considerable body of theory, and evidence, concerning childhood and even infantile sexuality. This new power can disrupt a life just as it can be used to create new life; or it can be controlled, integrated with the totality of the powers of the personality, and thus become a truly significant aspect of adult maturity. Some excesses at this period, though morally wrong and psychologically risky, will not necessarily interfere with normal maturation of the personality. But

sexual deviation is quite another matter, and if found by the counselor should be faced squarely as a serious hazard to healthy personality development. In severe cases professional therapy is indicated.

You will note that, without at all playing down the importance of adolescent sexuality, I am simply listing it as one of the powers undergoing significant development at this period.

Partly flowing from this emerging sexual power, but by no means exclusively derived from it, is a developing social power that is also truly remarkable. For many, adolescence is a period of almost complete social autonomy. There is, especially today, a marked emancipation from traditional family social controls. Job opportunities (as I suspect Mr. Stern will point out), except in certain depressed areas or periods, as well as cultural influences today, are such that many youths even though still at school have part-time employment with its attendant financial and social freedoms. Money is power, and the youth of America today have money in quantities unknown elsewhere in the whole of history. Social power, even apart from that conferred by relative financial emancipation, is evident in adolescence in the developing social skills, the free and easy social communication and cooperation that are emerging, a social poise and effectiveness that are definite marks of maturity. Father Potvin, the workshop's sociologist, will help you to see better the implications of all this for the adolescent role. Here again an alert counselor will be able to detect the beginnings of pathology, and will help the adolescent develop more wholesome interpersonal relationships leading to effective psychosocial maturity. Anti-social trends, of course, can be detected, and should be detected, earlier than adolescence; juvenile delinquents do not become so just at the onset of puberty. Dr. Suziedelis, in treating the psychological meaning of delinquency, will help you formulate the broad outlines of proper corrective and preventive programs for this difficult period of conflict with authority figures.

The emotional life in adolescence is also undergoing significant power development. Hates are deeper; loves are more violent; fears can become completely crippling and debilitating; anxieties can develop into neuroses or adolescent schizo-

phrenia. Emotional enthusiasms are a sort of special badge of adolescents, and they may take many forms: the harmless but intense rah-rah behavior of the high school and college set, the deeply destructive and almost paranoid antics of youthful rabble-rousers, and also the constructive, creative, and often heroic enthusiasms of a troubadour, a soldier, a crusader, or a mystic. Emotions at adolescence are not only being channeled towards new objects, and increasing in intensity; in the optimal developmental process, there is also an important change from the point of view of control. Certainly one of the most observable signs of personality maturation is the smooth, effective, and controlled functioning of emotional life. Undisciplined emotions can disrupt personality development altogether. The psychological counselor must be particularly skilled at understanding and interpreting emotional behavior. I am sure both Dr. Schneiders and Dr. Steimel will insist on the importance of this dynamic aspect of personality. The techniques of the psychological counselor should equip him for noting and dealing not only with the obvious, overt emotional responses, but also with the deeper, often more or less unconscious strata of emotional life. There can be here an immense source of power for good; or there can be simply a store of dynamite ready to explode. In no other area of counseling must there be as much caution, and, therefore, judgment and experience, as in the handling of adolescent emotional conflicts. No counselor should be allowed to function unless he can detect these conflicts; and only the most competent should be permitted to manipulate the psychological therapeutic techniques often required to prevent catastrophe.

In another area of psychological functioning, a broad area of interests, attitudes, and value systems, there are strong motivational forces that are emerging with significance in adolescence. Inasmuch as this is a vocational problem, it comes under Dr. Kinnane's special competence, and I am sure he will straighten you out if I lead you into heresy. The newer view of these dimensions of personality is that interests, attitudes, and values are not merely cognitive, but also dynamic. Thus, an interest in any object whatever tends to flow over into action, to become a motive, a driving force, and, hence, to become a source of power. Attitudes taken

towards an object, whether positive or negative, confer a valence on that object so that it has power to attract or repel; hence, the person will pursue it or avoid it -- in a word, will act. Value systems are not cold, theoretical, intellectual positions; they are dynamic. We generally find the time and the means to do the things we consider valuable. The powers available in these dimensions of the personality are often overlooked, but they should be considered important in the development of adolescence towards maturity. Here are examples, obvious I am sure, but perhaps helpful in clarifying the theoretical position I am trying to present. The adolescent interested in sports expends energy to pursue sports; one who values academic success more highly than social or athletic accomplishment will spend more time and energy on studies. Whatever is judged of greater value will command more attention, will capture more enthusiasm, and will become a channel, and a dynamo, of greater power. I am stressing here this variable of power, so I should like to emphasize that interests, attitudes, and value systems lead to the channeling of existent powers, and to the release and development of new ones. Skills become learned if there is need for them in the pursuit of objectives judged valuable. Abilities, physical, cognitive, social, become sharpened and strengthened when put to use for positively valenced objectives.

The newer concepts of education emphasize the importance of training the intellect in our schools, even in that stronghold of anti-intellectualism, the American high school, parochial as well as public. If I am too cynical or vituperative against present educational practice, I am sure Sister Marian Dolores, in treating the relationships between academic experience and personality dynamics, will give you a more balanced view. I believe that new concepts in education are emerging. In reality these concepts are not new; they are merely a rediscovery of traditional views after a nightmarish interlude of courses in general mathematics, general science, general shop, general driver training, general domestic science, and general waste of time. It is now being recognized again, in spite of persistent demands from parents that our schools do other things, that the high school is a place for learning subjects that have intellectual content. It is even becoming necessary to have something more than

hours in education to be considered qualified to teach. The adolescent years are years of immense flowering of the intellectual powers. Most investigators have claimed for some time that the I.Q., for example, that universally intelligible badge of something-or-other, becomes stabilized in adolescence. The ancients considered intelligence as a facultas, a potentia, and we certainly do not have to go medieval to consider it a tremendous power. As sheer power, we can very well accept that it is perhaps reaching its maximum in adolescence, to remain on an elevated plateau until early senescence. Knowledge is being accumulated, or at least can be if the motivation is provided, at a very rapid rate. Never again in life will it be as easy to learn facts and acquire skills. The exciting world of ideas is opening up for exploration, and lucky the adolescent who can be led to find there a habitation and a home for life. The power to think symbolically, developing since childhood, is now able to handle calculus and metaphysics, existentialism and relativity. The adolescent can be not only a fledgling prince, but a ruling sovereign in the kingdom of the mind.

Creative powers are also flowering. There are isolated instances of creations of works of art, especially in music and painting, in the childhood years, and there have been many masterpieces created in later years, but late adolescence is surely the favored time for great artistic and literary creativity. If the spark is not at least there by adolescence, nothing of much brilliance will come thereafter.

Of all the powers of man, the most elusive for analysis is his spiritual power. I am sure our expert in spiritual direction in the workshop, Father Tageson, will give you a more convincing analysis than I can give. But I believe that experience and reason combine to make it evident that the spiritual powers of man undergo an important élan towards maturity during late adolescence. Hence, this should be a time when spiritual direction is most needed and most fruitful. The preoccupation of the Romantic Movement with adolescent Sturm und Drang, with the phenomena of religious revolt and of religious conversion, was a recognition of this. At adolescence there is an engagement with reality and with the Infinite that can produce a mawkish Weltschmerz, but that also lead to a

Weltansicht that is basically spiritual. Although there are recorded vows of complete and perpetual chastity at tender years, such as that of Father Querbes, the founder of the Clerics of St. Viator, at the tender age of nine, nevertheless it is hard to see, outside such cases of special intervention of divine grace, how one can vow oneself to chastity before one can know fully what chastity means. To give up something for God intelligently one must have some awareness of what is being given up. Great and intense love of God is possible at any age of reason, but its flourishing to the point of complete and permanent donation of self to God seems characteristic of adolescence.

This completes my catalogue of the powers of man that come to fresh and fragrant flower during adolescence. These are the dimensions of the personality that make adolescence seem so explosive. What is important, of course, is that it is explosive with power that can ruin or remake lives, or that can change a world.

Nowadays it is much more fashionable to be dynamic than static, to do things rather than to take one's laissez-faire. Even our leisure time must somehow be filled with things to do. The dolce far niente of a more relaxed age has been largely lost. For youth this is particularly true; it is the most gone of all go-go ages. Youth may be hot with passion or burning with enthusiasm; it is almost never cold. Its own self-characterization is "cool," but cool to youth certainly never means lukewarm, except, of course, to things considered unimportant. There may be lust, but there is certainly also often Wanderlust; it is a time for love, not only of a mate, but love for life in all its exuberant vitality. It is truly the age of power!

Counselors must base their theory and practice on a recognition of this power. Their theories of adolescent change, whether formulated in terms of need constructs, of social stresses and strains, or of conflicts and their resolutions, must account adequately for the totality of these dynamisms of youth. No theory is sound that singles out only one dynamism, such as sex, or vocational choice, or conflict with authority, or the crystallization of the self-concept. An adequate theory must not only embrace all the dynamisms of

youth, but must account for their interrelationships. The "power model" seems capable of doing this. The total personality is immensely complex. There are not separate, isolated powers; there is a matrix of power, of different types, but interrelated and integrated. It is an old and still unresolved question how energy of one type, the physical, for example, can be harnessed and put to the service of other dimensions of life, such as the social, intellectual, or spiritual. This is but one form of a theory of equivalence of needs and of the interchangeability of need satisfactions. Compensations and sublimations have here found their theoretical rationale. Perhaps the better view is the more holistic: that the personality functions best when it functions integrally, as a unit. It could even be that the most useful construct is that of some sort of élan vital that is but an aspect of life itself. To be alive is power! This power may be usefully conceptualized into separate, but always relentlessly related, dynamisms that are effective for observably different results. But the same laws govern the different dynamisms because they are all dynamisms of the same power. These laws can be formulated. There is a law of exercise: a power becomes stronger when used. There is a law of atrophy: a power tends to disappear or at least to become weaker if not used. There is a law of substitution: a power may be channelized in different ways. There is a law of integration: powers are most effective when more than one are focused on a given objective, such as the directing of emotional, physical, intellectual, and even spiritual powers towards the solution of a problem. And there is also a law of conflict: uncontrolled and unintegrated exercise of one power can interfere with and nullify other powers that are at the moment weaker.

In practice, a counselor must recognize that powers repressed can go underground, and later break through in highly troublesome symptoms. The "don't do that" approach of the insecure is not the approach of the trained counselor. Youth does not really need objections to action; it needs recognition of its powers and a direction for its action. Repression of power merely guarantees a later explosion that will probably be purely destructive. So the job of the counselor will often specifically be this: help youth find outlets for its power.



This is basically what is done in vocational counseling, for example: to prepare for a calling in life in which there is opportunity to use one's abilities effectively. A job situation above one's powers (the future engineer who cannot get mathematics), or a calling that calls forth few of the individual's potentialities, is a dangerous vocational choice.

The destructive, anti-social, self-crippling powers of youth are studied widely and profitably today. Youth on the loose, youth without ideals, youth living a fast life of thrills, irresponsible youth, the "flaming youth" of the Twenties still ablaze in the Sixties -- this picture of adolescence is altogether too well known. But the problem is to capture this power for constructive living, and to uncover and develop other powers that should be at their peak. In The Great Imposter, hardly a sourcebook for serious participants in a workshop on adolescent counseling, there is a wonderful idea that in any organization there is always a lot of unused power lying around. The advice of the "Imposter" is never to try to steal power other people are trying to use. Never try to displace a chairman of anything; merely set up another committee with yourself as chairman. Never move into someone else's field of power and try to take over his project; simply install yourself as the power in the field of your own project. So also, in youth today there are vast amounts of misdirected power that erupt into individual tragedy and social chaos. There is power to be uncovered and tapped, power to be developed and intensified, power to be coordinated with other powers towards worthwhile goals, power that can be charged with energy to move mountains.

We must not downgrade youth. As we become older, perhaps more secure, certainly less enthusiastic and imaginative, we must try not to forget that youth is a time for heroism. The recklessness of youth, in other terms, is only the willingness to take chances for what is valued as important. The irresponsibility of youth may also be looked on as the refusal to be checked in the pursuit of high and noble goals. That there is something wild and elemental in the power of youth may be only that youth refuses to be satisfied with the cozy, comfortable, unchallenging life of conservative oldsters. Of course there should be assistance and a measure of control from those

whom life already has bruised, so that the power of youth may not lead to destruction. But there must also be an invitation, or at least an opportunity, for heroism. Youth becomes soft because successful middle-aged parents want it that way. Youth becomes soft because our adult-controlled culture is definitely entering a time of decadence. But when through public opinion enthusiasms become focused, for example during wartime on an enemy from without, youths by the millions rush to give their fresh young blood for their country. Give youth a chance to be heroic; help it find ideals that are worth living for, worth living intensely and even dangerously.

Counselors can easily catch the plague of our generation: stuffy over-organization, lifeless formalism, the stultifications of over-conventionalized and over-standardized techniques. We can become content to operate with rules and methodologies taught by dull professors in pedantic manuals. We should try rather to become infected with some of the vibrant enthusiasms of youth, to become impregnated again vicariously with some of its tremendous power. Youth may be a prelude to maturity, but there is danger that in becoming mature ourselves we have become merely jaded and over-cautious -- or -- simply tired. Youth is a time for heroism and for sacrifice. If maturity can be conceptualized, as suggested earlier, as the mobilization and coordination of all the powers of man for effective and productive action, then we must truly regard adolescence as the prelude to this period. But this means that the enthusiasms, the energies, the heroisms of youth should as far as possible be preserved and carried over into a truly mature adulthood. In this way youth can do much to save itself, and may, hopefully, save the world. In this way the spirit of youth, with all its titanic power, may energize a new generation of adults where, with heroic sacrifice and the wisdom of true maturity, man can work effectively for the true coming of God's Kingdom on earth, and prepare better for the Better World to come.

# UNDERSTANDING THE ADOLESCENT

by

Raymond J. Steimel

## INTRODUCTION

The American adolescent is almost unique in the history of the world. While the period of transition during which the teenager is neither child nor adult has obviously existed since the beginning of man, the special sociological and psychological climate in which the modern teenager grows to maturity seems peculiar to this generation. To both teenagers and adults adolescence is a period filled with contradictions. It is a time of dependence and of self-determination, a time of leisure and of intensive activity, a time of conformity and of rebellion, and a time of carefreeness and of responsibility.

The modern teenager might be described as:

A boy or girl whose energies are already sapped by the sheer process of physical growth, caught up in a whirl of school work and social activities in and out of school, confronted by decisions which will affect his entire life, confused by the shifting attitudes of parents, teachers, and society in general, all of whom doubt him and his behavior -- and bewildered by the complex and rapidly changing civilization into which he must soon fit, assuming all of the responsibilities of maturity.<sup>1</sup>

## ADOLESCENCE -- A CRUCIAL PERIOD

Due to the frenzy of activity, the confusion, and the drastic changes, both physical and psychological, that are taking place, there is very little time to make an adjustment or settle down before facing the serious business of planning one's

life. Vocationally, these last years of high school hold a significance unparalleled in the development of the individual. It is then that they get their first real experience with the world of work. It is then that they develop their attitude toward money, employers, advanced education, and, last but not least, toward fellow workers and employers. They know they will soon have to make a vocational choice, and while many realize the significance of such a step, they do not know how to go about it. As a result, major decisions are sometimes made on the basis of immediate opportunity or emotional attachment with little regard to long-range planning. When years later they find themselves trapped in a job or college sequence in which there is neither hope for personal growth nor the realistic possibility of change, they are faced with the dilemma either of continuing in an unpleasant situation, or of starting over again. The price of a change is usually a significant decrease in salary, plus a delay of several years in the acquisition of life's goals. There is little doubt that the vocational decisions made in adolescence greatly influence the future course of one's life.

Psychologically, this period is of no less importance. No period in the development of the individual, except perhaps the first years of childhood, is more critical in the emotional and social adjustment of the person. For a child the adjustment is almost completely interwoven with that of the parents, particularly the mother. As an adolescent, however, the individual must learn for himself acceptable ways of interacting with his environment. Surveys indicate that the problem of relating to other people is one of the most pressing concerns of the teenager. His self-reliance, his attitude toward people, his ability to communicate and get along with others will depend more on his own resources than on his parents. It is during this period that the young man or woman begins to feel the full responsibility for his action. The inability to get work, the loss of a job, the failure in school have a very personal meaning. It is now I who have failed, I who did not make the grade. Whether they meet with success or failure, each individual is expected somehow to emerge from all these experiences with the kind of personality that will be an asset to him in his struggle through life.

There is no greater challenge to the American parent or teacher than to help the teenagers through these important years. If childhood is referred to as the years of formation, then adolescence might well be called the years of decision.

It is, however, in the very area of helping adolescents to make their decisions that most adults feel helpless. In 1957, Bill Davidson writing in Collier's wrote that "Never in our 180-year history has the United States been so aware of -- or confused about -- its teenagers."<sup>2</sup>

That we are aware of them is only natural. For it is during adolescence that the young boy or girl blossoms forth as the mature man or woman. It is also during this period that the previously rather drab or colorless personality takes on distinctive qualities which stamp it with the character of an individual person. It is likewise during this period that the last ties of parental dependence are severed and the young man or woman becomes a responsible agent in his own right. By and large, this is a pleasant kind of awareness. There is another kind of awareness that teenagers merit, however, which is not so pleasant. Their peculiarities in dress, make-up, and language, their indifference to the many expectations of society, and their disrespect for authority have a way of demanding attention whether we want to give it or not.

The confusion, however, that exists in the minds of many parents and teachers is another thing. Confusion under any circumstances is undesirable. Certainly, confusion in the matters of education and guidance of adolescents is cause for alarm. Only when this confusion is removed can we hope to come to grips with the real problem of adolescents. Above all else this demands an understanding of the adolescent and willingness to work with him.

## THE NEED FOR UNDERSTANDING

Perhaps the greatest need of the adolescent today is understanding, especially adult understanding. How often have we adults heard the complaint, "You just don't understand." Almost every survey that is made on adolescents indicates that many of them really want to be understood and would like to have the opportunity to discuss their problems with a sympa-

thetic adult. Somehow they never seem to find the adult with whom they can talk freely.

One seventeen-year-old sums up his feelings in the following letter attached to a questionnaire.

Most parents do try I think to understand us but it's not an easy thing to do. Teenagers seem to live in a world of their own. They want to be boss in everything. It takes an awful lot of patience and understanding to know how to cope with us. Most parents don't want to try this though. When a teenager feels that he is not being treated right or he's deeply misunderstood things are going to happen. An awful lot needs to be done with that problem. If parents tried to understand teenagers more they would get along much better.<sup>3</sup>

In spite of an expressed desire on the part of teenagers for help and understanding in solving their problems, very little effective assistance is being rendered. Somehow we adults have not been able to meet their challenge. It would be a gross misrepresentation to say that adults are not interested. Anyone who has worked with teenagers and parents can attest to the sincerity of most parents in seeking what is best for their children. While mistakes are made, they do not spring from lack of interest. Most parents are willing, even at great sacrifice to themselves, to do what is right for their children.

Teachers, on the other hand, are certainly no less interested. They entered the profession primarily to work with young people. Their training includes not only the academic subjects but also courses in human relations, in psychology, and in sociology, in order to prepare themselves for this kind of work. What is more, many of them take additional courses in adolescent development or personal counseling in order to equip themselves better for the difficult task of teaching. In fact, most teachers feel that they have failed in their duty if, along with the intellectual stimulation, they cannot contribute to the personal betterment of the student.

The question of understanding others, particularly teenagers, goes beyond the desire to be of help to others or even

beyond special training in the area of psychological counseling. It seems closely related to the attitudes one maintains toward them. This does not mean that the desire and training are superfluous, but that these qualities must be accompanied by appropriate personal characteristics if they are to be used. All the brilliance in the world plus the sincerest desire to be of help to people is of little value if the personal contact cannot be made.

Though most educators agree that there are specific personality characteristics needed to be a good teacher, no effective screening program has ever been devised to weed out the undesirable candidate. Certainly, the normal college sequence and regular teacher certification remove some poor candidates. Still, not every person who completes the requirements for certification has either the qualities or the personality to become an effective teacher, any more than do all those who pass the bar examination necessarily become good lawyers. The same can be said for any profession. Any teacher will tell you that more than knowledge and skill is needed for success in working with people, especially a group as sensitive and as critical as teenagers. While it is not possible to list or even to describe the necessary personal qualities needed to work effectively with people, it is possible to give some of the attitudes that are indispensable in this kind of work.

There seem to be two basic approaches to working with people. The first might be called directive. In this the parent or teacher sees himself as a mature individual who is in a position to let others profit from years of experience and training. The first step, then, in helping or counseling someone is to obtain as comprehensive an understanding of the problem as possible. Once this is done, the solution is easy. The experienced person makes the decision for the less experienced. To many adults this procedure is the most practical and scientific way to get the job done. Unfortunately, human problems can seldom be reduced to such simple terms. The fact that the teacher communicates the solution to the pupil does not mean that the problem has been solved for this individual. Knowledge is seldom an adequate stimulus for action. No one likes to be told what to do. To many boys

and girls the advice of well-meaning parents and teachers is just so many words with very little appreciation or understanding of the important issues at stake. While it is true that they may have sought out the adult and even asked for his advice, this does not mean that they want it. What they want is understanding and the privilege of making up their own minds.

This leads to the second approach to working with the adolescent. Here the parent or teacher also sees the boy or girl as young and inexperienced, but, at the same time, sees him as an individual who vitally wants and needs to be a part of any decision that is made. Basically the adult is convinced that the adolescent in spite of his youth is capable of handling his own problem when given a chance. Essentially this is an attitude of confidence, optimism, and interest. Someone has described it as an "unconditional positive regard."

To be sure, these are extreme points of view; and there is a broad area between them. The question is, which approach most closely approximates our behavior in dealing with people, particularly adolescents? Are they considered helpless individuals who need to be led each step of the way or are they responsible young men and women, who need encouragement and understanding, yes, but who are capable of making their own decisions? Are we the kind who willingly listen to the problem and then give advice, or are we rather the rare teacher or parent who avoids whenever possible the need to tell others what to do and who prefers to let them do their own thinking and make their own decisions?

This approach the teacher has toward the job, this attitude he has toward people with whom he works, appears to be of primary importance in determining the effectiveness of his work. Proper attitudes create an atmosphere of mutual confidence and understanding. For this reason it is frequently referred to as the "understanding approach."

The understanding approach is characterized by three basic attitudes. The first of these is acceptance. Acceptance is a positive attitude. It regards the boy or girl as a person of worth, responsibility and dignity. It is an attitude by which the individual is accepted regardless of what he may or may not have done. It is characterized by a warm interest in the individual, by a sincere appreciation of the feelings and emo-



tions involved in every circumstance, and by a respect for the individual that goes beyond any prejudice or personal resentment. Such acceptance cannot help but induce in the adolescent confidence in himself and in you.

The fact that we accept the adolescent does not mean that we advocate, approve, or even sympathize with his behavior or plans, but simply that we recognize his right to do his own thinking and determine his own course of action.

Acceptance is best communicated through careful listening to whatever the adolescent has to say. The art of listening is indispensable to a good counselor. It is basic to all understanding. Even in our everyday contacts with people we need to learn to listen more and talk less. Its effects often astonish even the trained counselor.

Some years ago there was an elderly woman in Chicago who ran an ad in the paper that she would listen to anybody's troubles for the fee of one dollar an hour. The response was tremendous. People, old and young, came to her with their problems. She would listen attentively to each without saying a word. After a session with her, the clients reported that they were relieved and felt considerably better. Curious observers attempted to identify what special gift the woman had. After some investigation it was discovered that not only did she have no special training or preternatural power, but that the only qualification she had was that she was stone deaf and could not hear a single word that was said.

Listening alone, however, is seldom very productive; what is needed is interested, attentive listening.

Patterson states that:

The basic, most universal, most important technique in counseling and psychotherapy is listening. Listening to what another has to say is a basic manifestation of interest and respect.

To listen is perhaps the most difficult thing a student counselor has to learn. Not only must he avoid jumping in to direct the clients remarks, breaking in to ask questions, or attempting to demonstrate his competence or knowledge; he must be able to listen without preoccupation with his own

attitudes, feelings or needs.<sup>4</sup>

It should be mentioned here that although there are times and places where direct injunctions are in place and even necessary, these instances are rare -- probably much more rare than we are willing to admit. Being non-directive or understanding in our work with individuals or with groups is possible in far more instances than most of us realize. Both Snygg and Combs and Rogers in their respective books devote a special chapter to the use of the understanding approach in the classroom setting. Good teachers and supervisors seem to allow for a maximum amount of self determination.

It is certainly safe to say that most of the adolescents who come to adults for advice already know what both the school and society expects of them. What they want is someone with whom they can talk, someone who will think with them, someone who will listen, and someone who will respect them.

The second basic attitude is permissiveness. In many ways this is very similar to acceptance. Permissiveness is essentially a nonjudgmental attitude which permits the student to state his case in whatever manner he chooses. He may express any feelings, thoughts, or desires that he thinks appropriate. By the same token, he may withhold whatever he chooses as well. There is no danger of reprisal, no danger of censure or even disapproval. The parent or teacher is not there to decide what is right or wrong, acceptable or unacceptable. This is left entirely up to the individual. The atmosphere is one of acceptance, permissiveness, and confidence. The underlying conviction is that very little, if anything, can be accomplished unless it is initiated by the individual who stands to profit or lose by the decision. From a boy's or girl's point of view, this permissiveness constitutes a recognition of his or her right to privacy of the information, a respect for him or her as an individual. It takes away from the discussion any fear of blame thus making it possible to discuss freely anything they choose. It often happens that the very fact that the teacher has the necessary patience and self-discipline to listen and to refrain from probing or making judgments instills in the young man or woman the confidence necessary to discuss and eventually to do something about his

problem.

The third basic attitude is confidence in the capacity of the individual for self-direction. This does not mean that we expect the student to arrive at the most reasonable solution nor even the most practical solution; but it does mean we expect him to come to a solution. Many other and better solutions exist, but the only one that has any real meaning or educational value at this time is the one that this person finds within his ability and motivational system.

At times it almost appears as though some adults are afraid to let the younger generation grow up and assume adult roles in society. At birth the child is in a state of complete helplessness. Unlike many of the other animals, it is completely at the mercy of its parents during the first years of its life. At birth also should begin the gradual shift of responsibility from the parent to the child. This process continues through childhood and adolescence and is ordinarily completed by the end of high school. The assumption is that during the years of maturation the balance of responsibility gradually passes from the parent to the child until finally in adolescence the young man or woman is fully prepared to assume an adult role in society. How complete this transfer of responsibility is or how well prepared the young man or woman is by the time of graduation will depend upon the nature of earlier experiences. Adolescents do not become mature by accident.

This tendency to direct the lives of others can constitute a very real temptation for the adult who feels he has had the relevant experiences. No two experiences are exactly the same. Even though the externals of the experience often appear identical this never guarantees that the individuals involved are affected identically. Besides, in the case of many adults these experiences are so out-of-date that they no longer hold much real significance for the teenager of today.

These attitudes of acceptance, permissiveness, and confidence in the ability of individuals to solve their own problems are sometimes referred to as "the internal frame of reference," or as Patterson prefers to call it "the understanding approach." It is an attitudinal set or almost a philosophy of life which determines our method of dealing with others. In practice it makes the task of the teacher or parent much

simpler. No longer is he expected to be an expert in areas where he knows so very little; no longer is he expected to make decisions where he is not qualified. Rather, his job is to provide for each individual the kind of setting in which he will be encouraged and helped to make his own decisions. The teacher or counselor tries to perceive the world as the student perceives it, to judge it as he judges it, and to understand as completely as possible how the student feels about it.

This may sound as if the role of the teacher or parent in helping our youth has been reduced to that of a sounding board, a disinterested listener. Such is not the case. There is an art to listening. It takes both skill and self-discipline. It is this close attention to everything that is said, this serious attempt to understand the views of another, and this sincere reflection of feelings, that eventually engenders in the student a sense of self-assurance, confidence, and responsibility. Perhaps for the first time in his life the adolescent realizes that the one person who stands to profit or lose from any action he may choose to take is himself. He likewise soon realizes that he cannot expect an outsider to solve his problem or to take responsibility for him. The plan of action which emerges from such considerations will not only, as a rule, be in accord with accepted standards of behavior but will also have the advantage of being his own, a plan with which he will identify and a plan which he will work hard to execute.

Many adults are still hesitant to form a close, permissive relationship with adolescents since they apparently fear that this freedom will be abused. Maslow, however, considers this love for and respect for other human beings to be fundamental qualities in all good human relationships and states that, "While they are powerful tools, they are not dangerous ones. We may expect that ordinarily we cannot hurt anybody by loving and respecting them."<sup>5</sup>

The goal is to offer the kind of help the individual can use. Not everyone will be able to take advice, but everyone will appreciate and profit from understanding and respect.

## CONCLUSION

Someone has described modern teenagers as the "most

exasperating, the most unpredictable, and the most inspiring citizens in America." To the extent that they are unpredictable, there should be something that can be done about it. Unpredictability may be due to the fact that their behavior is so inconsistent and sporadic that it defies any kind of systematic analysis. If such is the case, the situation is hopeless and there is nothing that we can do about it. On the other hand, unpredictability may be due to the fact that we know so little about the needs, aspirations, and goals of the modern teenager that we have great difficulty in knowing what to expect of them. In that case there is something that can and should be done. Certainly, the studies, like the one of Remmers and Radler, or sound books on adolescent psychology are great helps in learning more about adolescents. In other words, if we knew what to expect of them, they would no longer remain such a source of confusion to the older generation. While it is true that psychologists never expect to understand human behavior completely, they nevertheless are deeply convinced that the more that is known about a person, the better can one understand and predict his actions.

To the extent that these teenagers are the most exasperating, we are faced with a much more difficult problem. Unpredictability implies lack of knowledge; exasperation implies lack of understanding. This is not remedied solely by surveys or intensive studies. Rather it seems to be something that depends on the way we relate to other people. Attitudes of acceptance, permissiveness and confidence in the individual have proved effective in creating a relationship of mutual confidence, understanding, and self-direction. Acquisition of these attitudes depends to a large extent on just how convinced we are that we should respect the importance of the self-concept in others. If we can offer the proper atmosphere, we can go a long way toward giving these teenagers a chance to discuss their problems freely and to be understood.

To the extent that they are the most inspiring citizens in America today, I'm sure no one of us would find fault. It is a ray of hope in an otherwise dismal world. Indeed, it is their enthusiasm and optimism that make working with them so interesting and challenging.

The role of the adult, then, in working with them would seem

to be, in the first place, to learn as much about them as he can, to do all in his power not only to understand them, but also to make them feel that they are understood and accepted, and finally to take a little hope and inspiration from the tremendous fund of energy and enthusiasm with which these young men and women face these years of decision. If this energy can be directed through the proper guidance and understanding, then we adults and teachers can certainly set in action a tremendous power for good, and contribute our bit toward meeting the challenge of today's youth.

#### FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>H. H. Remmers and D. H. Radler, The American Teenager (New York: Bobbs-Merrill Co., Inc., 1957), p. 50.

<sup>2</sup>B. Davidson, "18,000,000 Teenagers Can't Be Wrong," Collier's (January 4, 1957).

<sup>3</sup>Remmers, op. cit., p. 86.

<sup>4</sup>C. H. Patterson, Counseling and Psychotherapy: Theory and Practice (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1959), pp. 168-169.

<sup>5</sup>A. H. Maslow, Motivation and Personality (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1954), p. 320.

## SOCIETAL STRAINS AND THE ADOLESCENT

by

Reverend Raymond H. Potvin

It is difficult to grow up when there is confusion as to the when, where, and how of becoming a man. It is difficult to grow up when the valued goals of adulthood are incompatible with life's opportunities. The structure of American society is so constituted that values and role expectations are inconsistent for a large segment of our population. This is somewhat inevitable in any society, but in the United States the resulting strains are particularly crucial for the adolescent. The American dream of occupational success is basically a middle-class value, but it is shared to a large extent by all classes of society. Lower-class boys, while affected by the success cult, are handicapped in their pursuit of it and they develop a frustrating ambivalence toward society which often leads to normless behavior. Even those who conform, who work hard to achieve high status positions, easily overconform and neglect to cultivate worthwhile goals that give satisfaction and meaning to occupational success. It is not easy to grow up in confusion and hopelessness.

Psychological and vocational counseling can be of substantial help in aiding the adolescent resolve the strains to which he is subjected. It is imperative, however, that the counselor understand the source of these strains if his efforts are to be anything more than superficial. In a very real sense the child is a product of his society. Through interaction with parents and peers he acquires the values and expectations they share among themselves. He internalizes a culture which he may accept or reject in part, overtly or covertly, but one toward which he can not be indifferent. To understand a person and his problems it is important to understand his society and his place in it. For this reason the present paper will focus on some of the structural strains or incon-

sistencies in American society which affect adolescents. Discussion will be limited to lower-class boys. Girls and middle-class boys present other problems, no less real, but sufficiently different to warrant separate treatment.

Too much of the current literature on the adolescent is limited to a "bad-families-make-bad-boys" approach.<sup>1</sup> The individual and his family are related to the community in subtle and complicated ways. They are influenced by the tone or "morale" of a society which is as potent a source of security or unrest as any other factor, imaginary or real. Robert Merton has attempted an explanation of this phenomenon in his excellent discussion of anomie and social structure.<sup>2</sup> Anomie is a condition of society in which many persons lose respect for social norms or obligations, and this condition is generated, at least in part, by the society itself. In other words, anomie is not simply a personal affair. Norms are present, they are understood by people, and yet they are not respected because too many persons are ambivalent toward them, given the existence of strains or conflict between the norms themselves. One source of anomie is of particular relevance for the lower-class adolescent. Anomie arises when many persons in a society are required or encouraged to strive for a particular goal but are not provided with adequate, legitimate means to achieve it. In fact, a "good" family background can aggravate the situation. The more a lower-class boy acquires middle-class values, seeks middle-class goals, and is denied the opportunities to realize them, the more he is subject to strain and maladjustment. His behavior mirrors that strain as shaped and formed by his social position; it is not a simple reflection of his family relationships.

The "American dream," the ideology built around occupational success, is still a vital force in the United States. The belief in equality of opportunity is so pervasive and so emphasized that virtually every boy links his self-esteem to that dream. There is probably as much social mobility in many countries of Europe as in America,<sup>3</sup> but here there is more of an obligation to rise up and out of the social class into which one is born because it is firmly believed that anyone can be a success if he works hard enough. This "American dream" creates, for many boys of the lower classes, a



frustrating gap between a culturally favored goal and the actual possibility of achieving it. The slight rise in the mobility rate over the past years has been due to economic progress more than to any trend toward equality of opportunity.<sup>4</sup> Lower-class boys are still at a serious disadvantage when competing with middle-class boys.<sup>5</sup> The gap between ideal and possibility is real and results in anomie, which leads in turn to a defiant questioning of the legitimacy of the norms and ideals that can not quite either be disbelieved or believed.

Lower-class boys not only lack the family connections needed to ease their rise up the social ladder, but the school system and its culture add in many subtle ways to their sense of inferiority. Most teachers are middle-class women who, unconsciously perhaps but no less effectively, destroy the security of their less fortunate students by favoring boys from middle-class homes because these boys have better manners, they dress better, and they verbalize more. Actually, lower-class boys manifest considerable verbal ingenuity, but middle-class teachers do not appreciate the form it takes.<sup>6</sup> For these teachers, conformity to their own values is the criterion of worth which becomes unfortunately the virus of ambivalence. The end result is that lower-class boys become easily alienated from school and their chance of success in legitimate fields of endeavor is weakened considerably.

In his famous study of gang culture,<sup>7</sup> Cohen claims that these boys react to the strain that society imposes upon them in three possible ways. Some overcome the handicap at all costs; they copy the middle-class boys in speech and manners; they work hard; and they sacrifice their own subculture. Others mark time; they tolerate school but leave as soon as possible; they accept low-class jobs with no future but remain somewhat ambivalent about lost opportunities.<sup>8</sup> And then there is the delinquent response. Middle-class standards are rejected and self-esteem is related to status in the gang, a status that the lower-class adolescent can easily fulfill. There is an ambivalence in all of these solutions and it points to the superficiality of any thesis which dubs the adolescent as a conformist or non-conformist.<sup>9</sup>

In his analysis of deviancy, Talcott Parsons insists that when norms are violated ambivalence always exists.<sup>10</sup> In

other words the person who, because of strain, violates a norm, in some way accepts the validity of that norm even though for some reason he is alienated from it. It is a form of compulsive alienation. On the other hand, if a person should repress his alienative tendency and conform to the norm, he will tend to overconform or to conform compulsively. In the first case the reasoning is fairly simple. The underconforming person is still the product of his society and he has internalized its norms overtly or covertly. This is standard socialization theory. The reasoning behind the second case relies upon the reaction-formation thesis in personality theory. When a person represses certain inclinations, a typical defense against the possibility of their breaking loose is overconforming. Both under-conformity and over-conformity may be expressed actively or passively. This gives a four-fold division of possible responses to societal strains which frustrate the individual: compulsive performance, compulsive acquiescence, rebelliousness, and withdrawal. The lower class adolescent is capable of all four.

This analysis of ambivalent response to strain implies that the adolescent problem cannot be restricted to delinquency and contracultural gang behavior. A certain proportion of lower-class boys do overcome their handicap, develop middle-class aspirations, and, in general, behave as middle-class society expects them to behave. This type of response is not a guarantee that these boys are well adjusted, because it demands a powerful orientation to middle-class values which leads easily to active overconformity in the search for occupational success.<sup>11</sup> The end result is uneasiness and stress. Normally speaking, occupations are means to ends of personal satisfaction and worthwhile accomplishment. A reversal in the hierarchy spells trouble, and yet overconformity to the success goal implies such a reversal, for along with overconformity comes the rejection of other basic values, the importance for oneself and for society of doing a man's job, an honest and serviceable job. Paul Goodman has insisted that "on the simple criteria of unquestioned utility, employing human capacities, and honor, there are not enough worthy jobs in our economy for average boys and adolescents to grow up toward."<sup>12</sup> Many boys know that their productive years will be

spent in a scandalous waste of time and energy, but they chart no new course because they must work primarily for occupational success. This condemns them to a certain ritualism devoid of vital force and initiative, a ritualism incapable of coping with the difficulties and the great mysteries of life. More seriously, it condemns them to stereotyped thinking devoid of the human element and to the abnegation of personal responsibility.<sup>13</sup>

The compulsive acquiescence of the lower-class boy who leaves school and settles for a respectable minor job is no less of a problem; his frustration and ambivalence are no less real. To his mind he is a failure, and the type of work he is called upon to perform is not much help in reestablishing his ego. Many of the unskilled and semi-skilled occupations are without intrinsic interest, either because of the work itself or because of the product. The worker has no voice regarding the significance of his own activity. This leads to unhappiness and not much of a future.<sup>14</sup>

In a sense the "delinquent" solution, whether withdrawal from all obligations or rebelliousness, is a little more satisfying. Middle-class standards are rejected and the boy's self-esteem is based on the dreams of a private world or on acceptance by his peers and gang. These have standards to which he can conform. Unfortunately, the greater his ambivalence, the more compulsive is the nonconformity and the more extreme are the excesses of behavior. W. B. Miller has pointed out that the so-called delinquent culture is related to lower-class culture in general, for example, the stress upon physical strength and courage.<sup>15</sup> Moreover, adolescents not enjoying the full privileges of adults are impatient with restrictions.<sup>16</sup> Thus, gang activity becomes an attempt to prove masculine qualities and to protest against the adult world. It is a solution to the need for conformity while rejecting prevailing middle-class values.

The majority of lower-class adolescents face a difficult decision. Some work hard for a "good" job which is little related to the basic values of life. Others settle for a "bad" job with little intrinsic worth. And still others settle for nothing at all. Social responsibility is conceived as a farce or, if taken seriously, is believed reserved for the select few.

The sad commentary to this discussion is that the structure of our society is in great measure responsible. It is simply not geared for adolescent security or for the attainment of meaningful goals toward which they can work effectively.

This analysis does not explain the behavior of any one boy, for, after all, he does have choices, each of them carrying its own problems of adjustment; but it does explain one of the major sources of adolescent ambivalence and behavioral difficulties. Other factors, such as personality characteristics, differential association, and family background set the stage for the actual choice among alternatives or for vacillation between alternatives.

These considerations are of crucial importance to a vocational or psychological counselor.

Guidance should not consist in finding a societal hole in which the boy can be fitted snugly. He is not a "thing" to be measured and packaged. He must be made to understand his society and its problems -- otherwise he will have little insight into his own difficulties despite extensive psychological counseling. Too often, personnel people attempt to create a middle-class boob or apply the varnish of middle-class conformity to lower-class subjects. The problems of adolescence are simply driven underground and become grist for the psychiatrist's mill. The counselor should stimulate creative activity commensurate with the boy's capabilities and create an opportunity for him to exercise it. The latter task may be nearly impossible in present-day America, but it is nonetheless the responsibility of those who would work with youth.

#### FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Cf. Kenneth Keniston's criticism of Glueck's Unraveling Juvenile Delinquency in his article "Entangling Juvenile Delinquency," Commentary (June, 1960), pp. 486-491.

<sup>2</sup>Robert K. Merton, "Social Structure and Anomie," American Sociological Review (Vol. 3, no. 5), pp. 672-82.

<sup>3</sup>Cf. S. Lipset and R. Bendix, Social Mobility in Industrial Society (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1959).

<sup>4</sup>Gerhard Lenski, "Trends in Intergenerational Mobility in the United States," American Sociological Review (Vol. 23,

no. 5), pp. 514-23; and N. Rogoff, Recent Trends in Occupational Mobility (Glencoe: Free Press, 1953).

<sup>5</sup>Cf. August Hollingshead, Elmtown's Youth (New York: Wiley, 1949).

<sup>6</sup>W. B. Miller, "Lower Class Culture as a Generating Milieu of Gang Delinquency," Journal of Social Issues (Vol. 14, no. 3), pp. 5-19; and Hollingshead, op. cit.

<sup>7</sup>A. K. Cohen, Delinquent Boys: The Culture of the Gang (Glencoe: Free Press, 1955).

<sup>8</sup>These are the "college boys" and the "corner boys" of W. F. Whyte's study of an Italian-American Slum, Street Corner Society (Chicago: U. of Chicago Press, 1943).

<sup>9</sup>For another approach cf. Walter Metzger, "On Youth and Conformity," American Association of University Professors' Bulletin (Vol. 46, no. 4), pp. 357-60.

<sup>10</sup>Talcott Parsons, The Social System (Glencoe: Free Press, 1951), chapter 7.

<sup>11</sup>Even in these boys should indulge in "delinquent" behavior while in college, their delinquency is no more than an "accident." Even though ambivalence may be at the source, this type of delinquency is of a different order from that which is a way of life for some lower-class boys. Cf. Harry Johnson, Sociology (New York: Harcourt-Brace, 1960), p. 568.

<sup>12</sup>Paul Goodman, "Youth in Organized Society," Commentary (February, 1960), p. 99.

<sup>13</sup>For example, the middle class in Germany played an important role in Hitler's rise to power. Cf. H. Gerth, "The Nazi Party: Its Leadership and Composition," American Journal of Sociology (Vol. 45), pp. 517-41; K. Heiden, Der Fuehrer: Hitler's Rise to Power (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1944); and W. M. Kotschnig, Unemployment in the Learned Professions (London: Oxford U. Press, 1937).

<sup>14</sup>Cf. C. R. Walker and R. H. Guest, The Man on the Assembly Line (Cambridge: Harvard U. Press, 1952); and D. Riesman et al., The Lonely Crowd (Garden City: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1955), chapter 7.

<sup>15</sup>Miller, op. cit.

<sup>16</sup>Bloch and Niederhoffer, The Gang: A Study in Adolescent Behavior (New York: Philosophical Library, 1958).

## A REALISTIC APPROACH TO SEXUAL MATURATION

by

Reverend Henry V. Sattler, C.S.S.R.

Jean Kerr has written a book: The Snake Has All the Lines. She means that all the attractive terms seem to have been adopted by the opposition, the enemy, the Devil. Realism and sex are terms appropriated by modern writers for their myopic focus on the vicious, the grim, and the depressing. But if "the children of light" are to be "as wise as serpents and as simple as doves," we shall have to recapture some of the lines.

Personally, I like the definition of realism proposed by Clare Booth Luce:

Realism does not consist in ignoring the pageant of suffering....Nor does it consist in merely noting it with however artistic or journalistic an eye for the grimmest and most revolting details. Realism consists in accepting personal responsibility as the only realistic way of setting out to do something about it.<sup>1</sup>

This definition is a challenge. Realism is opposed to both optimism and pessimism. Optimism pretends that there are no difficulties, pains, or hurdles in life, or that these will inevitably go away if we ignore them. It surrounds difficulties with a rosy cloud of "hearts and flowers" and refuses to face physical difficulties by chanting, "I ain't got no body." Pessimism refuses to believe that pain can ever be transformed into joy; that failure can ever become success; that virtue can conquer vice. An optimist who cannot stand the test of reality becomes a cynic. A pessimist who refuses to believe that the difficulties of life can be transcended is equally cynical. Realism always implies responsibility and hope.

Realism in adolescent sexuality faces virtue and vice, noble ideals in the face of failure, pleasure as well as pain, earthiness and spirituality. It is the realism of G. K. Chesterton:

Virtue

I am sorry, old dear, if I hurt you,  
No doubt it is all very nice,  
With the lilies and languors of virtue,  
And the raptures and roses of vice.  
But the notion impels me to anger  
That vice is all rapture for me,  
And if you think virtue is languor  
JUST TRY IT AND SEE!<sup>2</sup>

We must rescue sex from both the mere scientist and the hedonist. The so-called exact sciences tend to use terms with univocal meanings. The more individuals and the more species to which a term applies, the more satisfied the scientist is with it. Univocal scientific terms appear in dictionaries. Our dictionary defines sex as the quality of being male or female. This refers to a coupling, transferring apparatus between two individuals for the purpose of generation. In this meaning, sex can be applied with perfectly equal validity to plants, to animals, and to human beings. In its coupling sense, it has been applied without humor and without hesitance to plumbing and electrical fixtures! How scientific can one get?

If sex in human beings is merely a coupling, active-passive function, there are no sexual problems in adolescence. Unless congenitally deformed, accidentally or designedly mutilated, each human being is endowed with the fundamental apparatus from birth.

The hedonists have appropriated sex simply as a special kind of pleasure, aside from generation. To satisfy this drive, any stimulation or any individual of the same or opposite sex will do. No problem of adolescent sexuality arises from this meaning. There is no challenge where there is no need to control.

I shall refer to sex in the merely scientific or hedonistic sense as venereal pleasure or Venus.<sup>3</sup>

Sexuality must be more than Venus because the human being can use venereal pleasure in many ways. Venus can be merely the satisfaction of an itch, the release of tension, the drive toward detumescence. It can become the vehicle of a lust in which a partner becomes an animated thing. Venus can be an expression of hate in sadism or rape. It can become a method of self-hate in masochistic surrender. A person may forget himself in an orgy of ecstasy, in which case Venus becomes a method of escape like drugs or alcohol. Sexual pleasure might pay for affection and popularity. It could be an avenue of rebellion against authority. Sometimes, Venus provides autistic self-consolation; sometimes it consoles another. Finally, Venus can be a means of communication in the physical gift of self and discovery of the other, whether in a homosexual or heterosexual experience.

Since Venus can mean all these things, human sexuality must be defined in other terms. Philosophy, yes, and poetry, must enter. I insist that human sex is the quality of being masculine or feminine, which is impressed upon the human being at the moment of conception, and which must be educated to paternity and maternity. Sexuality is a quality which is at once physical, emotional, intellectual, volitional, social, and spiritual. It is a potential never fully achieved. The maturing person exhibits a unique, yet changing, example of this general quality by which humanity is divided into two halves. If human sexuality is for continuing parenthood (parens means begetting and implies education), then we can state the problems of sexual maturation, which are the problems of masculine and feminine identification and acceptance of the roles of man or woman, father or mother.

The adolescent is "in between" childhood and maturity, "too old for toys, too young for boys." The challenge of maturing should not focus on sin, neurotic drives, delinquency, community pressures, and resistance to authority. No adolescent is fully free of these factors, but maturation is a challenge in itself. Other lecturers will discuss the aberrations of Venus and the mechanisms of neurosis and sin. Here let us imagine a healthy child entering puberty without complica-



tions.

Such a child has learned to accept himself in the "me stage." He has learned to relate to another in the "he stage." He feels at home with others in the "we stage". He has recognized a vague attraction between the sexes in the "she stage". This boy or girl has come from a family where the boys have identified with a virile, authoritative, and effective father, and the girls have imitated a warmly affectionate but unpossessive mother. Finally, this adolescent has learned calm and complete answers to all his expressed and unexpressed questions regarding physical sexuality. He knows the bodily differences between boys and girls; where the baby came from; how it gets out; and how it got there in the first place.

If such a growing child had achieved the full growth of sanity, sexuality, society, and sanctity commensurate with his age, what problems of sexual maturation would he have to face realistically as he entered adolescence?

## CONSCIOUSNESS OF PHYSICAL SEXUALITY

### Physique

Every normal boy or girl is interested in developing a masculine or feminine body. Tab Hunter and Elizabeth Taylor might be their screen models. On the other hand, adolescents are embarrassed and self-conscious about these desires. Both boys and girls should be encouraged in their interest and should neither hide their growth nor accentuate it. Whatever teasing over an early mustache, whatever humorous whistles at a girl's developing curves, these should always show approval of their growth. A girl should not be permitted to walk round-shouldered because her breasts are developing before those of her classmates, nor should she be permitted to over-accenuate them by her dress. The development of physique should be an opportunity to suggest the masculine responsibility for which physical strength has been given, and the feminine warmth and loveableness of which the feminine figure is but a promise.

### Genital Development

Every adolescent must realistically face genital develop-

ment. A boy will be aware of the growth of the penis from small childish proportions, the appearance of pubic hair, the experience (perhaps frequent) of spontaneous erection, and the intermittent experience of nocturnal emission. The girl, too, will notice development of breasts, female figure, pubic hair, and the onset of menstruation, at first irregular and then regular. From now on her life will bring a new experience of emotionality dependent upon the ebb and flow of the powerful hormones which regulate her cycle. For both sexes, these changes will involve a general physico-sexual tension and excitability, sometimes without apparent external stimuli.

Of course, both boys and girls should have been told about these new experiences in a simple fashion before they happened. Yet, since it is impossible to determine the precise moment, the new experience will need fresh help. In giving such help, the following points might be stressed:

- (1) Meaning: The whole rhythm of ovulation and menstruation should be explained to the girl so that she can understand her potential of motherhood, which is a trust from God, so she may cooperate with Him in bearing His (God's) children. Be careful to explain the father's part clearly so the young teenager will not be terrified of pregnancy from a kiss, caress, or even the presence of a boy. Conception is not caught like a virus. Explain that the amount of blood lost in menstruation is not a serious, or even noteworthy loss to her system. Someone has romantically called menstruation, "the weeping of a disappointed womb."

Unless the physical reaction, such as cramping, is severe, the young woman should be discouraged from pleading "sickness". This is unrealistic. There are difficulties and compensations in growing up.

The young man must accept frequent erection and spontaneous nocturnal emission as perfectly normal. He should be helped to understand the purpose this function has of expressing married love and of begetting a child. To tell him merely that "taking pleasure

is sinful" leaves him terrified without a context in which to understand why. Beware his fear that he is losing his "manhood." Emission at night is nature's way of ejecting excess of seminal fluids.

Both boy and girl should learn that irregularity of these happenings merely indicates that bodily thermostats are not yet fully developed and in good working order.

- (2) Earthiness: Idealistic youth finds it most difficult to admit being of the earth, earthy. The young person must not develop a fastidious distaste for the body and its humors. From the time an infant "dribbles at both ends" to the moment of death, the human being must learn to live with the body. Elimination, perspiration, body odors, menstrual flow, seminal emission, etc., must all be accepted realistically, i.e., with a recognition of their usefulness and meaning to the human person and with the calm acceptance that they are messy. Young people should know that their parents will not be surprised to discover various body stains on clothing and bed linen. Many a youngster has gone to frantic lengths to conceal such indications from parents. Our tiled bathrooms and our middle-class fastidious refusal to recognize bodily functions in conversation have sometimes persuaded young people that their own early experiences are unique and not the universal experiences of their sex.
- (3) Humor: Healthy laughter is often the best antidote for the lugubrious seriousness of so many adolescents who take their experiences as uniquely traumatic. However, we must laugh with, not at, them. There is something a bit ridiculous about the body and even Venus. Saint Francis of Assisi addressed his body as Brother Ass, not in disgust or derision, but out of affection.
- (4) Vulgarity: There is a certain vulgarity which can be permitted within the home without offending the sensibilities. Though we may decry vulgarity and forbid it, its "open secrecy" may sometimes clear

the air. Recall the vulgar belly laughs of your growing up and you will know what I mean.

(5) Special Hints:

- A. Not every boy sins as a result of erection, but everyone who grows to male adulthood experiences erection several times weekly, or even several times daily. Gross bodily activity such as wrestling with a playmate or animal, bicycling, or jumping may occasion such an experience. Calm, healthy rest may be accompanied by erection. Riding in a bouncing automobile or bus, nervous tension while taking an examination, or riding a roller-coaster may accompany this experience. Nothing is wrong with the individual. Only wide awake consent and forwarding of such feeling could be in any way sinful. There is a difference between joy and pleasure. Joy is in the will and for this we are responsible. Pleasure is in the senses; we are not always responsible for this. Only if willed joy agrees in forbidden pleasure can we be guilty of sin.
- B. Nocturnal emission always brings with it a sense of guilt for the moral young man even when fully asleep. The emotion is so intense that it seems to drag the sleeping will along. The accompanying venereal dreams may occasion anxiety and scrupulosity. If he attempts to make a decision immediately upon awakening, his feeling of having sinned will render an intellectual judgment difficult. Let him refuse to judge until some time after awakening and the feeling tone has died down. The presumption is against his having consented unless he deliberately set the suggestive scene before going to sleep.
- C. The violence of seminal emission frequently awakens the adolescent. He is not obliged to try and stop the mechanism either physically or by voluntary "fighting". With a brief prayer, he merely permits the reaction to continue as though he were an impersonal observer.

- D. Most young women of tender conscience have great difficulty in understanding sexual feeling. Any tension or feeling of affection and warmth frequently can be mistaken by such girls for fully approved sexual passion. Even the solar plexus tension of fear, or the feelings of micturition, have been mistaken for venereal pleasure by both sexes. It is very difficult to describe venereal feeling, or orgasm, to a girl simply because the actual experience is often rare and because sexual passion is so diffused within a woman. A boy has no doubt when you indicate to him the spasmodic pleasure of male orgasm; the girl does not know what you are talking about. When necessary, it can be explained to a young woman that the enlargement of the breasts and nipple tenderness, followed by an exudation from the genitals, and completed by a spasmodic release of nervous tension are the external signs of sexual orgasm for a woman. But the explanation will too seldom be recognized by her until she has experienced it within marriage.
- (6) Masturbation: Masturbation is a perennial problem with the teenage boy and more often affects the teenage girl than we are willing to admit. The morality of it is obvious; the spiritual direction needed I leave to the special lecturer on the subject; its use as a neurotic release I leave to the psychologist. Here, I want to mention that it is an average problem. It may be discovered accidentally. It may be discovered by experimental curiosity. The teacher, counselor, and parent should be able to notice the signs. Shock or horror is not the correct reaction. Sympathetic correction is in order. Such correction should always be given in the context of the meaning of sexuality.

#### The "Bad Thought" -- (Day-dreaming)

Young people are disturbed by imaginings which never attracted them during childhood. Boys will imagine "pin-ups,"

nudity, and sexual play. Girls will tend to imagine very intense and amorous affection. To understand the difference in their imaginative approaches, consult the low-class magazines for boys and girls, such as Male and True Romance. We must explain that this appetite is quite natural and good in itself, but that it is very dangerous. This appetite for sexual experience is something which belongs in matrimony and every healthy young person should anticipate the pleasures of Venus. But this should generally be as unimaginative an anticipation as, "When I am old enough, I may smoke." To do otherwise is to risk stirring the passions to such an extent as to cause sin. Explain very clearly the difference between impurity and immodesty in thought. An impure thought is one in which the person pictures an actually impure action, such as masturbation or fornication, with full approval. Such a picturing usually involves the person himself. An immodest imagination is one which pictures attractive semi-nudity or warm, almost passionate affection. Only if such imagination is indulged without any reason and with great danger of sexual stirring does it become sinful. If this were not true, we could not take our young people to the museums or to the beach.

### Erotic Love

All adolescents "fall in love." These experiences are adolescent "crushes". Erotic love does not necessarily include Venus. In itself, erotic love is the enthusiastic, romantic, passionate discovery that I can break out of the shell of my loneliness and discover another self. A crush of this sort may involve another teenager of the same or other sex; it may involve a teacher, an older friend, a neighbor, a spiritual director. Often the object of the crush is not aware of it. Sometimes the very romantic enthusiasm leads the adolescent to hide his love even from his beloved. Often erotic love repels the very thought of sexual experience; yet if the love is expressed it will lead to experimentation with the kiss, the caress, and petting. It is the fortunate teenager who experiences his first crush for an older person who is mature and moral. Far from taking advantage of the crush, such a person will disengage himself with kindness and understand-

ing. Notice that "puppy loves" are not necessarily heterosexual, nor are they automatically immoral. The young person must be sympathetically treated without solemnity. He can even be teased about his affection so long as the teasing is kindly. With more maturity, erotic love may become the prelude to marriage. Both now and later, point out that common sense and good reason must guide, control, and, if necessary, eliminate the affection of this moment.

Incidentally, in its strict meaning of longing for the infinite, erotic love may even be experienced toward God. This is exemplified in the enthusiasm of religious conversion and the "first fervor" of the religious novitiate.

### Petting and Kissing

The great emotional discovery of youth is the discovery of loveableness. Every girl wants to know whether she is kissable and caressable. Every boy wants to know whether his affection, and hence his being, is acceptable. Almost of necessity, then, young people will be driven to some mild experimentation in the area of giving and receiving affection. This is not necessarily evil. Only if the affection goes into the realm of conjugal expression is it in any way seriously sinful. The tongue kiss, intimate touching and handling of the sexual organs, are strictly marital privileges. Young people see this immediately when you explain that they have no right to begin what they have no right to finish. Again, one may explain to the young woman that she should not lightly give, through the eyes or touch of any casual acquaintance, what she should reserve entirely for her husband. Just as she does not reveal her inmost thoughts except to someone she loves and trusts, so she should not reveal the secrets of her person as expressed through her body. St. Augustine says that young people are more "in love with love" than with each other; and this love for love may lead to sinful experimentation.

## INTELLECTUAL PROBLEMS OF MATURATION

### Qualities of a Partner

Adolescents are unconsciously discovering what makes a good husband or wife. Encourage them. They are shocked

to find that their beloved parents have faults and are not perfect spouses. They make critical evaluations of the roles their parents have played towards each other and towards the children. They begin by rejecting their parents because they cannot distinguish between good example, bad example, and the loved parent. Later they idealize their own future perfection as spouses without realizing the difficulty of achievement. (Personally, I was most acid in my judgment of priests when I was a minor seminarian!) The desire to discover masculinity and femininity in an intellectual way should provide educators with a golden opportunity to discuss qualities of a partner and to propose virile and womanly heroes. Before falling in love too deeply, their intellects should have been armed with norms.

I am firmly convinced that young people want to communicate with the other sex to discover the differences in thinking and feeling. Unfortunately, we leave this to experiment. I do not know of a single worthwhile book or course for the teenage audience which explains intellectual differences between the sexes. Teachers know that teaching a class of boys is quite different from teaching a class of girls. Have they ever analyzed this knowledge or presented it in their classrooms? I suspect that if we provide more opportunities for mutual intellectual exploration, there will be far less mutual physical exploration.

### Principles of Sexual Morality

During the earliest portion of adolescence, if it has not been done before as it should have been, true and clear principles of the sixth and ninth commandments should be taught. Though it might be true that we have accentuated chastity over charity, it is also true that our young people understand charity, but do not understand chastity! To teach the principles of chastity, the following points are imperative:

- (1) The positive value of Christian married love, including its physical aspects, must be insisted upon. Though the Ten Commandments are mostly negative statements, they each protect a positive value, i.e., life, love, property, truth.
- (2) The young person must know clearly what Venus is.



- Occasionally, our fulminations can cause a young man to fear urination in a public bathroom!
- (3) The three moral principles must be clearly taught with examples proper to the actual level of the young people.
  - (4) Since morality involves virtuous living, the virtues must be presented as challenges, strengths, and "dares". Virtue comes from the same root as vir-ile, vir, man! Do not beg or plead with young people -- dare them! (Methods of teaching may be found in Sattler, 1953, and Mission Helpers, 1961; References 4 and 5.)

### Curiosity Regarding the Opposite Sex

Besides an unexpressed wish to know how the other sex thinks and feels, there is a quite reasonable desire to know about the physical functioning of the other sex. At least in later adolescence, girls should have some idea of male erection and passion and of their own possible contribution to it by various forms of immodesty of dress and touch. Boys, on their side, should know something about the difficulties of menstruation and of premenstrual tension. They should not be embarrassed by the ridicule of friends when they wonder why Dorothy won't go swimming today. Both sexes should develop a realistic approach to childbirth. This realistic approach should parallel the outline above on physical changes in their bodies. Here, however, it should be more intellectual since the experience is still somewhat distant. Childbirth is not an idyllic, romantic experience, nor is it so messy and painful as to resemble a medieval torture. Both the joys and the pains, the responsibility and the satisfactions, should be emphasized.

## VOLITIONAL PROBLEMS OF MATURATION

### Love

It is during the age of adolescence that virtue patterns are best set up. Since the whole concern of the human being can be reduced to the discovery of real love, we must proceed with conviction that the interest of adolescence in affection,

physical experimentation, falling in love, etc., is really an attempt to discover what love is. Unfortunately, though we can describe, exemplify, and define love, it is not amenable to teaching. Teaching is essentially the inculcation of truth. Here, preaching and poetry are more valuable. The pursuit of goodness and the development of prudence are not amenable to the teaching process. In the development of virtue, we can advise, encourage, correct, approve, punish; we can give examples, ask "embarrassing" questions which will lead the will in another direction; we can propose ourselves and others as models. But we stand helpless before their freedom and the grace of God. Only the witness of our lives and the ringing conviction of our hearts will inspire them. Repetition of value statements will also help: "Love is the determination to promote the entire welfare of the beloved." "Ask yourself, 'What kind of a father would he make for my children?'" "Am I sufficiently developed in every fiber of my being to be worth loving?" "Would I be willing to spend my life making him happy?" The answers to these questions, I suggest, will lead the young people to develop the virtues of patience, fortitude, humility, sacrifice, etc., which will make them the virile men and devoted women they ought to be.

### Responsibility

Adolescents characteristically want freedom but are unwilling to face the consequences of their acts. I suspect this is one reason they are both anxious about sexuality and yet often reject correct information. Most of them demand absolute moral principles. Show them that prudence is not the virtue of certainty! They must learn to live with the agony of Saint Paul: ". . . with fear and trembling work out your salvation."

## SOCIAL PROBLEMS OF MATURATION

### Means of Communication

No matter how virtuous the young person, he cannot help facing the impact of radio, television, magazines, paperbacks, and newspapers. The semi-nudity which is taken for granted on most of our television and motion picture screens will certainly affect the normal male, no matter how integrated

his education. His natural curiosity will never be satisfied. He must learn neither to look avidly nor yet to retreat nervously from the reality which faces him on all sides. As someone passes him an obscene cartoon or tells him a vividly "dirty" joke, he must learn how to face this reality without shock or succumbing to the temptation. He can safely read until he understands, or look until he perceives the nature of the situation, then he can quietly turn away. If a perfunctory laugh will get him "off the hook" let him give it without fear that he is approving. The adolescent must be taught that the first strong attraction to obscenity or ordinary sexuality is never in itself sinful.

### Seduction

In our modern life, the possibility of seduction is real for both boys and girls in either homosexual or heterosexual fashion.<sup>6</sup> Both boys and girls should be taught not to travel alone with strangers and not to go into strange homes. As one mother said to her teenage son, "Joe, some men are worse for you than bad women." Though at one time we were hesitant to mention sexual dangers of the most normal kind to the young people, today we are not helpful to them unless we also mention the dangers of abnormality. If they read newspapers, they will notice cases of heterosexual and homosexual attack and of rape. It is not realistic of parents and educators to force boys and girls of eighteen or nineteen to go to their dictionaries to discover the meaning of rape.

### Dating

Dating is a democratic substitute for the parental selection of a marriage partner. To achieve the goal of dating, youth should go through four states.<sup>7</sup> Group dating should enable boys and girls to get together, without pairing off, just to discover how to enjoy each other. Random dating can be compared to window shopping; it should be an attempt to look over the available selection without "buying." Steady dating is the acceptance of a partner "for a limited trial." Courtship follows when two people agree that they are probably suitable marriage partners. Unfortunately, American young people have agreed to drop all the steps except steady dating. How

this has come about I leave to others, but its dangers in pre-marital impurity and unwise selection of a marriage partner are obvious. How this custom of steady dating can be changed is a problem of social pressures.

### CONCLUSION

I think I have presented the chief problems which face the normal adolescent in sexual maturation. These problems can be complicated should parents be disunited, puritanical, overly strict, indulgent; or if the young people are neurotically aggressive, insecure; if the social pressures are strong. But they are there whether these pressures are or not.

I would like to make some suggestions to parents and counselors.

#### For parents

- (1) Don't pretend that these problems have never happened to you.
- (2) Be realistic. Trust them without being suspicious, but do not be surprised and disappointed when they fail.
- (3) Leave yourself open for discussion, but never demand confidences.
- (4) While making yourself available remember that, "They also serve who only stand and wait."
- (5) Do not be jealous if they go to others for advice. It is not always because they distrust you, but because they wish to test your opinion from another point of view. Sometimes they will go to a classmate (pray that they pick the more mature), an older relative, a priest, or teacher.

#### For counselors

- (1) Please challenge our young people to the hard things of life. Do not try to motivate them on the basis of conformity, rightness, oughtness, or justice alone. Dare them to be different. Christ was a "square" to the people of His time, and yet He was the only real rebel of His time.

- (2) Do not take their preoccupation with Venus at face value. It is true that the problem of self and sexual identification is strong, but very often they are trying to disturb you. The more you are disturbed, the more you will delight them. They now provide "feedback" for our sociological analyses. If "lack of love" or "sex" is the cause of delinquency in our reports, they, too, can read, and they will blithely tell you what you expect to hear.
- (3) They may not know what they are talking about when they use knowing or obscene terms. The roughest customers often join the most hair-raising vocabulary with the most abysmal ignorance.
- (4) Never treat their sexual problems out of vocational context. The vocation of adolescence is that of "apprentice adult." In the near future they will marry, enter the single state dedicated to God in clergy or cloister, or remain single in the world. Everything you inculcate must be against the background of these vocational contexts.
- (5) We advisors can be immature. Many a counselor feels jealous when his client leaves and goes elsewhere. To make the individual mature is to make him independent. Remember that not every counselor is good for every client. We must know our limitations and humbly recognize our ineffectiveness.
- (6) Our greatest failure is in providing young people with their own leaders. If we merely tell them what to do in concrete, they will remain immature or rebel. Our Catholic schools are not noted for developing independent thinkers and enthusiastic leaders. (I suggest a study of Y.C.S.)

## FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Clare Booth Luce, "The Real Reason," McCall's Magazine (February, 1947).

<sup>2</sup>Maisie Ward, Gilbert Keith Chesterton (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1943).

<sup>3</sup>C. S. Lewis, The Four Loves (New York: Harcourt

Brace and Co., 1960), p. 131 ff.

<sup>4</sup>Henry V. Sattler, Parents, Children and the Facts of Life (Paterson, N. J.: St. Anthony Guild, 1953).

<sup>5</sup>Mission Helpers of the Sacred Heart, Vital Steps to Chastity (Towson, Md., 1961).

<sup>6</sup>Paul Waring and Dean Travis Boyce, Homosexual Freedom (Box 155, College Park, Md., 1961).

<sup>7</sup>E. E. LeMasters, Modern Courtship and Marriage (New York: Macmillan Co., 1957).

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# GROUP DYNAMICS IN ADOLESCENCE

by

Joseph D. McGovern

## INTRODUCTION

By group dynamics is meant the dynamic or cause-effect phenomena which occur within a social group. Group dynamics has to do with the way groups form, develop, and maintain structural integrity and functional effectiveness, move toward goals, and satisfy needs through goal achievement. No group in our society manifests the operations of principles and methods of group dynamics more evidently than the adolescent peer group.

In general, adolescence is manifold and complex. It consists of a combination of biological, psychological, social, and cultural factors and conditions which every individual in our society experiences and reacts to during the maturational phase. In order to understand adolescence, one must take an inclusive, wholistic, dynamic, realistic, and responsible point of view.

The challenge of adolescence, stated in generic terms, is to grow and develop from childhood to adulthood. This complex process involves the development from a relatively diffuse, experimental, and non-specific form of organization and behavior to a more highly differentiated and integrated state of being and action. Although each person is initially confronted with this task at conception, the factors and conditions which constitute this task precede the individual in time by generations and are intimately interwoven with the social and cultural milieu as it is experienced by the individual.

Infancy and childhood may be considered to be preparatory phases, during which the individual is required to solve certain developmental tasks to create a foundation for adolescence and adulthood. In order to understand adequately a

particular adolescent individual or group, it is necessary to evaluate previous experiences and their relationships.

### SPECIFIC FACTORS AND CONDITIONS RELEVANT TO GROUP DYNAMICS IN ADOLESCENCE

What are some specific factors and conditions which are relevant and significant to group dynamics in adolescence? For purposes of brevity, these are only schematically outlined below. The reader is referred to the literature on adolescent psychology for elaboration.

#### Pubertal Changes

Although pubescence is universal, every adolescent is faced with the developmental task of adapting individually to consummatory physical, physiological, and psychological changes which inaugurate adolescence. Group variability prevails but the initiation of adolescence for the individual is generally relatively sudden and abrupt. There is also an asymmetry in the individual rate of growth and development. Each individual has to adapt to these reorganizational discrepancies and attendant phenomena of disorientation, insecurity, and anxiety.

As a result of the consummation of pubescence, there is generally a relatively distinct discontinuity in the qualitative meaning and significance of sex and sexual activities. Although this discontinuity is understandable and is not incompatible with the principles of development, nevertheless each adolescent individual must deal with and adapt to the complexities of discontinuity.

As a child, the individual exhibits erogenous sensuality, exploratory and manipulative activity, curiosity about anatomy and masculine or feminine development and the assumption of appropriate sex roles. If this were not true, there would be no rationale for sex education or counseling.

#### Prolonged Duration of Adolescence

From the sociological point of view, adolescence extends from pubescence to that time when the individual adopts an independent socio-economic status in adult society. Conse-



quently, if an individual fails to complete the majority of his adolescent developmental tasks, which are symbolized by a full achievement of primary adult socio-economic status, he may continue to behave and to be regarded as an adolescent, even though he is chronologically mature.

In our contemporary society almost a decade is required for most individuals to complete fully all the developmental tasks of adolescence, i.e., to move from the derived, dependent status of childhood to the primary status of adulthood. Despite some apparent compensations during this prolonged period, basic individual needs for adult status are frustrated. In essence, the length of adolescence results in prolonged status deprivation which constitutes an important aspect of adolescent motivation.

#### Interim and Marginal Status of Adolescence

In adolescence the individual is expected to surrender the established and familiar derived status of an emotionally dependent child and to strive simultaneously for adult status to which developmental factors and conditions are inducing him. In short, the adolescent has neither the full status of a child nor an adult but is required to straddle both phases of childhood and adulthood.

Although an individual is never completely without some form of status, the adolescent's status is vague, ambiguous, and changing. Essentially, he is in a state of becoming -- a state of disequilibrium which persists until a more stable, permanent adult status is achieved and consolidated. Thus, the adolescent lives in what has been characterized as a "no man's land" in which interim and marginal aspects may contribute significantly to problems experienced.

#### Transitional Anxiety

Transitional anxiety in adolescence may be considered as an effect of the relationship which prevails between status and self-esteem. In other words, the self-esteem of the adolescent individual is a function of the degree to which various actual accomplishments measure up to both aspirations and expectations. Self-esteem is threatened and transitional anxiety is experienced in situations which either endanger

actual or potential status or stimulate aspirations for status change, and which are disproportionately high relative to realistic probabilities of successful attainment.

Our society and culture probably manipulate adolescent transitional anxiety to encourage maturation in the appropriate direction at a desired rate of speed. The individual relieves transitional anxiety by solving developmental tasks in an appropriate manner at the expected rate of speed. Failing to do this the individual may unconsciously resort to acting-out or other symptomatic behavior to relieve conflict. Reduction of transitional anxiety may constitute a major motivation for certain observed forms of adolescent behavior in today's society.

### Transitional Turmoil

Our contemporary society and culture have been characterized as urban, industrial, technological, and secular. They constitute a fast-moving, complex, transitional, unsettled, and occasionally chaotic system which is constantly changing and reorganizing. In addition, we live in an age of nuclear anxiety and the world is split into a cold war struggle between two major antagonistic socio-cultural groups. These conditions amount to transitional turmoil.

Because no one lives in a vacuum, the adolescent is continuously influenced by interaction with the culture through various media of communication. The adolescent is confronted with the task of resolving transitional turmoil which combines with, reinforces, and complicates transitional anxiety. In the maturation process, the adolescent has to come to terms with paradoxes, conflicts, confusions, inconsistencies, irrationalities, lack of integration in ideologies, stereotypes, myths, clichés, catch-words, slogans, and other guiding fictions. Essentially, the adolescent has to distill meaning from noise in order to establish his own identity. Transitional turmoil may constitute a massive, constant "brain washing" of significant proportions during the adolescent period.

### Lack of Bench Marks in Adolescence

Our society either lacks, is silent, or is confused as regards an explicit cultural model and clear standards and guides (bench marks) for adolescent phases. We may unconsciously wish to induce anxiety in the adolescent as was stated previously. Nevertheless, it is doubtful that culturally standardized bench marks are practical because of numerous individual differences, various socio-economic classes, overlapping developmental stages, and the complexity of the developmental tasks which are a prerequisite to assuming adult status in our highly specialized and differentiated socio-economic order.

Even when we attempt to establish bench marks for adolescent phases, we only compound the issue. In contrast, less complicated societies either telescope adolescence into a relatively short period of time or characterize it by a ceremonial event such as a puberty rite.

In short, the lack of explicitly tailored cultural bench marks for the adolescent phases in our society may contribute to some problems encountered.

### Family Organization and the Adolescent Emancipation Process

The structure of the family unit in our society has gradually changed from a composite unit to a nuclear unit. There are less collateral relatives and fewer offspring. The social perspective has switched from a family-centered orientation to extreme individualism. Individual prerogatives now take precedence over the values of primary group solidarity. This change of value orientation is an important factor as regards parent-youth problems in the adolescent emancipation process.

Secular agencies in our society have successfully competed with the home to the extent that there is a generalized functional deterioration of family activities. Economic, educational, recreational, governmental, protective, and vital functions have either been usurped or delegated outside the home. Consequently, the contemporary family has evolved into a companionship family whose chief functions are to satisfy personal needs in the form of comradeship and mutual equality. Although such interpersonal functions are impor-

tant they are difficult to establish and maintain in a primary group when other vital functions are lacking. Because the family is reduced to standing on its own interpersonal relationships, conflicts are intensified and counteractive behavior results.

Because parents are basically unable and unwilling to maintain indefinite responsibility for offspring and because society also needs to establish a new generation to maintain continuity of the social order, most parents, of their own volition and under pressure of social expectations, influence the adolescent by subtle and pervasive gestures to strive for primary adult status.

The adolescent typically reacts to the deprivation of childhood status and to the instigations to seek adult status with conflicts involving dependency and independency. The adolescent naturally resists surrendering the dependency and security of childhood and experiences problems in becoming a person in his own right based upon his own competence. In addition, because the outcome of his strivings for primary adult status is usually in doubt, the adolescent experiences uncertainty which may reinforce anxiety. In short, the issue involves a necessity to fly on his own combined with uncertainty about the outcome.

This basic independency-dependency conflict may be exacerbated by parent-youth problems during the emancipation phase. Many factors combine in this process. For example, a sociological factor such as rate of social change is reflected in what is called generation conflict. Symptomatic expressions such as communication difficulties, conflicts of interests, differences in milieu and cultural content arise from differences in ages and experiences between the two generations in a rapidly changing society.

There are also value and attitudinal conflicts between adult conservative realism and youthful liberal idealism. The active, impulsive, visionary, and idealistic but logical adolescent has not yet experienced many of the realities of life. On the other hand, the parents are likely to be more sedentary, rigid, cautious, and realistic because their youthful optimism has been tempered by sobering experiences.

When some parent-youth conflicts reach acute proportions,

attitudes of restriction, authoritarianism, interference, ambivalence, projection, denial, rivalry, envy, apprehension, indifference, neglect, self-preoccupation, over-protectiveness, lack of respect, nagging, ridicule, and condescension serve to complicate the ordinary problems of emancipation and stimulate adolescent acting-out.

The adolescent is also motivated by needs for volitional independence and self-assertion and is resistive to adult standards, direction, and control. Arrogance and rebellion typically accompany the emancipation process. Many adolescents perceive parents as representatives of a society which denies them equal status and full membership. They also cherish unrealistic expectations of achieving complete emancipation immediately. Under the stress of increased emotional instability and precarious lack of adolescent status, childhood conflicts may also be reactivated.

### PEER GROUP

With these various factors and conditions and their combinations as a background, let us now turn to a consideration of the peer group dynamics in our culture. Space does not permit a consideration of gang dynamics which is worthy of a separate paper.

The peer group is a primary, informal, and highly cohesive face-to-face group of adolescent age-mates which naturally and spontaneously arises in our culture as a result of the various factors within the adolescent individual and the conditions of his marginal, transitional, prolonged, and insecure status in the "no man's land" between childhood and adulthood.

The peer group is initially unisexual but may differentiate into a heterosexual group. The majority of adolescents belong to a peer group in our contemporary society. From the psychological point of view it is the unfortunate individual who lacks sufficient maturity, skill, and opportunity to affiliate with a constructive peer group. The average adolescent usually enters the peer group at pubescence and withdraws at the courtship stage.

The peer group is one of the major social and educational institutions in our adolescent culture. It has the largest

enrollment of the most highly motivated and ego-involved participants. It marvelously applies principles of teaching and learning in natural, informal, eclectic, conscious, and unconscious ways. It rapidly and efficiently inculcates some of the most effective, permanent, and transferable attitudes, values, and behavior.

### Motivations for Peer Group Affiliation

The adolescent is motivated for affiliation with the peer group because he perceives it as a reference group whose goals and standards are similar to his own, and because he anticipates that membership and activities will satisfy his needs and reinforce his own value system and experience. The individual's willingness to permit the peer group to influence him is determined by the extent to which he perceives the goals and value system of the group to be in accord with his own and with those of other groups with which he identifies. In short, the adolescent affiliates with the peer group because he perceives it as a reinforcer of his own value system and as a potential satisfier of his needs. However, affiliation with a peer group is a product of both the individual's expectations and those of the group.

The following are typical examples of individual motivations for peer group affiliation:

- (1) need for belongingness, gregariousness, and togetherness;
- (2) attractiveness of activities, members, and leader; (This attractiveness may not necessarily be based upon liking but upon respect, confidence, awe, admiration, desire to identify with, and to be associated with a particular peer group.)
- (3) need for self-actualization;
- (4) need for development and maintenance of consistency in attitudes and behavior;
- (5) need for relief of transitional anxiety and turmoil;
- (6) need to develop and maintain more compatible, satisfying, and effective interpersonal relationships;
- (7) need for personal learning and problem-solving;
- (8) need for derived status, prestige, recognition, and

- development and protection of self-esteem;  
(9) opportunity to play roles and to assume roles;  
(10) satisfaction of dependency and security needs.

### Selection for Group Membership

A particular peer group will only tolerate within limits certain deviations of personality and behavior. Each group develops its own characteristic atmosphere, structure, and process. Although selection does not entirely control what occurs during the group experience, the peer group relies heavily upon selection.

Although selection depends upon both the mutual needs of the particular individual and group at a certain time, the general purpose of selection is to achieve a balance of membership (personalities and roles) within the group which is most conducive to cohesiveness, growth, change, and learning.

Either the leader, or both the leader and the members, may act as selectors. The candidate may also engage in self-selection based upon individual needs and goals. In general, the most popular form of selection is the group-intake method of observing the candidate in the actual group situation during a trial period. Selection is also a continuous process which is engaged in by all concerned and is intimately related to the codes of a particular group.

Some of the criteria of selection include readiness to join, potentiality for contributing to the structure and process, probability of benefiting from the group experience, individual-group compatibility, ability to communicate and interact, frustration and stress tolerance, role repertoire, capacity to accept and abide by norms and leadership, and role-openings in an established group.

### Cohesive and Disruptive Factors in Peer Group Dynamics

Because peer group members are in a field-dynamic relationship to one another, a change in one part of the group is accompanied by changes in the other parts or in the group as a whole. Thus, the peer group is not only a dynamic system of factors and conditions but also a process of continuous change and reorganization.

Cohesiveness may be defined as the totality of forces which induces the members to remain in the group and to pursue group goals. Withdrawal from the group and various other forms of behavior constitute a source of potential disruption. In short, the peer group has within itself the seeds of its own destruction. The very facts of interaction and interdependence suggest a potential for competition, conflict, frustration, and withdrawal. Some peer groups are active; many are reactive. At any time there may be either a balance or imbalance of field forces which impel members toward or away from a peer group.

Some of the factors and conditions which contribute to cohesiveness in the peer group are as follows:

- (1) Group Code System: The group code system refers to a set of formal or informal, implicit or explicit rules which prescribe specific ethics, ideals, goals, methods, and standards of attitudes and behavior approved or required of the members in a particular peer group and toward members of other groups. The codes guide behavior, protect the group, and reflect the values of a particular group. These codes may either be collectively established, structured by the leader, or evolved in the group process. Codes vary between and within group at different times according to the group process. The codes are principally enforced and maintained by sanctions and ego-involvement.
- (2) Group Atmosphere: The emotional-social climate or psychological atmosphere of the peer group is a function of the code system and leadership, and is significant in determining the kind and degree of cohesion or disruption of the group structure and process. The atmosphere is a subtle, complex, and intangible whole -- a summation of all the stimuli that affect the membership.
- (3) Interaction: One of the most important, distinctive, and identifiable characteristics of the peer group is the immediate opportunities for interpersonal interaction. This interaction is a broader concept than



- communication and involves a mutual or reciprocal influence among the members. Interaction increases stress tolerance, reduces feelings of isolation and uniqueness, permits the utilization of group resources, and provides for learning and change.
- (4) Identification: Identification is an important factor in peer group dynamics and is closely related to interaction, ego involvement, and transference.
  - (5) Transference: In the peer group situation members transfer or displace affects associated with other significant persons and experiences. This behavior may be positive, negative, or ambivalent. It is typically unconscious, dynamic, and repetitive.
  - (6) Acting-Out: Acting-out is a function of transference. It consists in unconscious attempts to use transference activity not only to rationalize conflicts or relieve tensions but also to re-experience and attempt to resolve these conflicts in terms of the immediate group situation and relationships. Various forms of egocentric role-playing represent defensive and symptomatic acting-out. Nevertheless, acting-out constitutes valuable learning material in the peer group because it is dramatic, readily observable, and provides significant and relevant data for group interpretation and analysis. The peer group tolerates certain kinds and degrees of acting-out because of its abreactive value, opportunity for insight development, and mastery of conflicts and behavior. Unacceptable types and degrees of acting-out behavior are counteracted by group codes and sanctions. In general, acting-out has reality-testing value and is exploited by the peer group for cathartic and educational purposes.
  - (7) Tension: Tension is a common phenomenon in peer groups. It occurs for various reasons including discrepancies between actual experience and ideal concepts or goals, dependency-independency conflicts, struggle for adequate life space, problems of libidinal support, and conflicts between individual wishes and needs and the expectations and requirements of

the group. Tension is summated in the form of a common group problem and is related to hidden agenda and other latent fantasies and conflicts.

- (8) Communication: Communication is a cardinal aspect of the peer group. It is the medium of problem-solving, development of communality, and sharing of perceptions, experiences, and values.
- (9) Role Dynamics: Role dynamics represents the process of assuming and playing roles. The peer group may be conceived of as a system of roles which combine into a group structure. By this process the individual reproduces and incorporates the attitudes and actions of others. Thus, role playing is a function of group expectations and self-perceptions. When roles conflict, conscious and unconscious mechanisms are brought into play in order to resolve the conflicts and discrepancies. By this process the individual experiences opportunities to develop insight into the characteristic roles which he plays and to extend and deepen his role repertoire.
- (10) Reality Testing and Consensual Validation: Reality testing is the basic goal of peer group dynamics. Consequently, the group situation provides opportunities by which the members may test and experiment with the reality of self, relationships, and the environment. The factors of atmosphere, leadership, communication, interaction, etc., assist members to cope with, adapt, change, and transfer learning.

Consensual validation serves to reduce attitudes and feelings of uniqueness and isolation and to determine the nature and limits of reality by the process of agreement among group members.

Reality testing and consensual validation bring the issues underlying peer group dynamics into direct relationship with the criteria of reality and problems of understanding and adaptation.

#### Group Dynamic Principles and Methods of the Peer Group

In combination with various factors and conditions, the

peer group utilizes identifiable principles and methods of group dynamics. Unlike some institutions in our society the peer group does not consciously regard itself as a teaching and learning agency. It maintains an eclectic approach and is not bound by scholastic bias in theory or techniques.

Some of the principles and techniques of group dynamics are as follows:

- (1) The peer group meets needs as they arise and are expressed by the individual. It is generally sensitive to individual readiness and differences.
- (2) The peer group sets goals and requirements in a progressive, developmental, and appropriate manner. It thereby realistically controls frustration and militates against failure. It reduces the confusing, frustrating effects of individual, trial-and-error problem-solving, continually reinforces learning by salient cues, and provides support, reassurance, and encouragement.
- (3) The peer group teaches continuously -- not in isolated, massive doses. Its teaching is spaced, distributed, and interwoven with recreational and social activities which provide appropriate and timely adolescent rewards and reinforcements.
- (4) The peer group provides opportunities for constant group-and-self-evaluation. It not only establishes and maintains criteria, but also offers external judgments to measure individual progress.
- (5) The members work together closely and informally in formulating and carrying out a dynamic, on-going curriculum.
- (6) The peer group deals with resistance by seeking to understand objectively and resolve the conflicting needs of the individual as regards problem-situations.
- (7) The peer group capitalizes on real life problems and issues in the individual's personal life situation. It maintains an emotional relationship and expediently uses emotionally-charged situations as teaching and learning opportunities.
- (8) Although the peer group maintains a firm, external

frame of reference and authority, it also deals with the subjective, internal, phenomenological field of the individual. It shares attitudes and experiences on a personal basis and operates in a genuine atmosphere of rapport, mutual acceptance, understanding, empathy, and solicitude.

- (9) The peer group deals with the individual personality and situations in a comprehensive, wholistic manner. It does not artificially abstract individual or situation into dissociated or fragmented elements.
- (10) The peer group does not drill knowledge into a passive recipient but encourages and fosters activity, communication, action, and interaction.
- (11) The peer group manipulates feelings of loyalty, belongingness, ego-involvement, willingness to sacrifice for the good of the membership and to prosecute group goals, and the need to conform and measure up to aspirations and expectations.
- (12) The peer group teaches by the example of older, more experienced, successful members who are perceived as adolescents, not adults.
- (13) The peer group not only rewards but also utilizes threats and punishments in an explicit, public, consistent, predictable, understandable, appropriate, specific, timely, contiguous, hierarchical manner. These punishments run the gamut from disapproval, censure, rebuff, ridicule, withholding of full membership, reduction of relative status, various forms of ostracism, to complete, unequivocal rejection, a penalty worse than injury or death for many adolescents.

### Functions of the Peer Group in Adolescence

What are the functions of these principles and methods? The following are some of the functions of the peer group in adolescence:

- (1) The peer group offers a compensatory, substitutive interim, derived status together with group affiliation, and a frame of reference which the adolescent

- lacks in his "no man's land" situation.
- (2) The peer group is one of the strongest "closed shops" or in-groups in our society. It provides members with an organized union, characterized by an effective program and a solid front. It is a cohesive in-group in its relationships to all non-members and representatives of other groups. It pools energies and resources, erects barriers, and is used as a group lobbying and bargaining instrument with adults.
  - (3) The peer group provides apprenticeship and preparation for adult social status, about which the adolescent individual is uncertain and insecure.
  - (4) The peer group acts as a novel and more acceptable form of authority for the individual adolescent. It essentially displaces some parents and other adults as ego-ideals. It repudiates other loyalties by transferring allegiance to itself on a person-to-person and group basis.
  - (5) The peer group appropriately provides the individual with rewards of acceptance, approval, recognition, and prestige (the cardinal personal needs of the adolescent) for his conformity to group codes and goals. It also has the power to punish any deviations.
  - (6) The peer group provides security through group identification and belongingness (we-feeling) together with relief from the stresses of perceptual ambiguities, conflicts and frustrations inhering in the factors and conditions which contribute to transitional anxiety and transitional turmoil.
  - (7) The peer group assists the individual in emancipation from the home, family, and parents. By providing a source of values outside the home, powerful assistance, support, and encouragement, the peer group assists the individual adolescent to resolve dependency-independency conflicts in the launching process.
  - (8) The peer group offers compensations not only for the problems and stresses associated with adolescence per se, but also for special deprivations that confront certain individuals by virtue of their socio-

economic, ethnic, racial, and religious affiliations.

- (9) The peer group is essentially an educational institution which processes and interprets information, values, and attitudes, and helps the individual adolescent to learn and develop as a person.
- (10) The peer group provides a variety of opportunities to gratify sexual interests as well as norms for governing sexual behavior. At least two-thirds of the adolescent group in our society credit the peer group as the principal system of sex education in our culture.

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

It would appear from the foregoing that the peer group arises in our society and culture in response to the needs of the adolescent to meet and deal with the challenges of maturation. The peer group reacts to the various factors and conditions of adolescence with identifiable principles and methods of group dynamics. The peer group apparently constitutes a cohesive and effective social, educational, and therapeutic institution which efficiently and economically brings about effective, permanent, and transferable learning and change. It accomplishes this by accepting and dealing with individual differences in readiness and motivation, satisfying critical, personal and social needs, resolving barriers to freedom of locomotion, and assisting individuals with problems of goal achievement.

Essentially, the peer group is a dynamic structure and process which spontaneously establishes and maintains its cohesiveness and integrity by leadership, codes, atmosphere, rewards and punishment, communication, interaction, role-playing, and reality-testing. It serves various critical functions peculiar to the factors, conditions, and problems of adolescence in our society, and effectively utilizes principles and methods of group dynamics in a natural and spontaneous manner.

To the extent that these observations and inferences are true, what is our responsibility as educators and counselors? It would appear that some of these are as follows:

- (1) We may investigate peer group dynamics more actively and carefully in order to adopt and incorporate, in individual and group work, those principles and methods which are valid and appropriate to adolescence.
- (2) We may indirectly approach adolescent individuals through the existing peer group medium or more directly by equivalent group methods.
- (3) We may constructively influence existing and potential peer groups to integrate true moral and social norms, content, and goals.
- (4) We may assist adolescent individuals to join and prosper in a particular peer group which is acceptable to adult standards.
- (5) We may be cautious in our ethnocentrism. When we approach a particular adolescent individual we may be careful how we reflect the challenge of adolescence. We should also be prepared to answer motivational and reality questions in an effective manner. We should also keep in mind that the individual has membership in a primary reference group and is subject to the factors and conditions involved in the structure and process of peer group membership.
- (6) We may continually check the transfer value of our educational and therapeutic attempts with the adolescent individuals and groups. Attitudes and norms are not internalized unless their value in actual life situations is recognized and accepted, and unless they satisfy basic personal and social needs. Thus, we should not only concentrate on a cognitive approach but also encompass relevant and significant motivational, social, and cultural aspects of adolescence, particularly non-sexual needs and goals of the adolescent during this critical developmental period.
- (7) This wholistic and dynamic approach may assist us to be just and charitable in our relationships with adolescents who are seeking by whatever means available to become persons in their own right.

# THE DYNAMICS OF CHILD-PARENT RELATIONSHIPS IN ADOLESCENCE

by

Alexander A. Schneiders

## THE CONTEMPORARY ADOLESCENT: A PORTRAIT

It is not easy to draw a sharp portrait of the contemporary adolescent, not only because of wide individual variations, but also because he is in a stage of cultural transition. This is what Friedenberg had in mind when he wrote of The Vanishing Adolescent. On the other hand, there are times when all of us feel that today's youngster is basically no different than his counterpart of a generation ago, and that perhaps our perception of him is distorted to a noticeable degree by the psychological presbyopia of old age, and by the paramnesia that invariably occurs whenever we retrace our steps in memory and go back to the nostalgic past. As Pearson points out in his memorable volume, Adolescence and the Conflict of Generations, a certain amount of repression and distortion occurs with respect to our own adolescence, because we dare not remember what it was actually like.

On the other hand, we cannot escape the impression that the youth of today are different from those of a generation ago. The contemporary youngster is often more deeply disturbed and less tranquil than we would like him to be. He does not seem as sure of his values and his goals as he should be in order to face the conflicts and difficulties of adult living. He often lacks the zest for the challenge of adult responsibilities that seemed to be a quality of previous generations. There is often a lack of sureness to the direction of his strivings and a looseness of personal integration that stand in the way of a resolute confrontation of basic issues regarding himself and society. Borrowing one wag's definition of the Liberal, the contemporary adolescent seems to have his feet planted solidly



in mid-air. He has not made up his mind about his vocation, the role of military service in the schema of his life, the value and place of rock-and-roll music in the cultural strain, his obligations to and relations with his family, or whether he is willing to fight to the death against a scourge like Communism.

These are the things that stay the hand of the portraitist as he tries to capture the image of the contemporary teenager. The image does not hold still long enough; it shifts from day to day, and from year to year. In much the same way that the individual adolescent is in a period of personal transition from child to adult, so the concept of adolescence is in a period of cultural transition and has not yet crystallized into a solid image that anyone can describe with a great deal of accuracy. We all realize, of course, that the events of the past thirty years have so disrupted the main currents of life that the adolescent can be readily pardoned for his uncertainty and inconstancy. The values of the world, and the general shape of things have changed so radically that the adolescent does not know exactly where or how he fits into the picture. The world has literally become a threatening place in which to live, and there is no longer the complacent certainty of existence that characterized human life prior to the fateful year of 1914. It was then that the world began falling apart, and it has continued to do so at a rapidly accelerating rate ever since.

The impact of two massive, frighteningly destructive world wars, a disastrous economic depression, the constant threat of total annihilation, and the enforced disruption of daily living by the requirements of military service, have so thoroughly disengaged human values, and so completely altered the perception of reality, that the adolescent does find himself treading air rather than walking on solid ground. Psychologists and psychiatrists are referring to this state of affairs when they speak of universal anxiety, and the constant stress and threat of our contemporary existence cannot breed anything but anxiety.

This is the world that the adolescent finds it hard to face. And he knows with magnificent certainty that it is a world created by the generation that preceded him. Because of his own anxiety, he does not trust this world, and he does not trust the generation that created it. And, therefore, he stands in

perpetual conflict with those important persons in his life that are a part of this unreliable generation. He does not see eye to eye with his parents on many things; he scoffs at the things that they regard as important and valuable; he ridicules their jaded morality, especially when he finds that in practice it involves many contradictions; he develops an open and sometimes violent rebellion against the traditions, the mores, and the values of a society that by its own admission is decadent. In some instances this rebellion flares into full-scale delinquency, and the adolescent becomes an outcast in a society that callously prepared the way for his downfall.

### THE ADOLESCENT PROBLEM AND THE PROBLEMS OF ADOLESCENCE

This condition of society, and the conflict of generations which it breeds, helps to create the adolescent problem; but it also contributes its share to the problems of adolescents. In some degree or other the adolescent problem has always been with us, although wearing a different mask, because the period of adolescence contains within itself the seeds of disruption. It is a period of rapid and profound transition, and, therefore, it cannot be a period of stability and high-level integration. It is a time of deep-seated change in every department of personality, from the simplest organic structure to the most complicated psychic mechanisms that determine the adolescent's behavior and relationships.

For example, the physical organism is undergoing constant alteration causing considerable anguish, and interfering with the development of the ego. Sexual impulses and temptations, anxieties, fantasies, and guilt feelings hammer away at the bastions of conscience and morality until the adolescent no longer knows right from wrong. The vital interests of today become tomorrow's shadows, with nothing left but a fading memory of the joys once experienced. The simple and happy friendships of the preadolescent period are stormed out of existence by the demands of newer and different interpersonal relationships. The secure superego of childhood is replaced by the tortured conscience of the adolescent seeking to formulate a reliable moral code. The satisfying religious

beliefs that seemed so certain and unassailable are corroded by doubts, conflicts, and contact with a scientific and economic world that knows little of God and often cares less. This is what transition means, and in many instances, it leads the adolescent down the path of disorganization and despair.

But it is not enough to be tortured and confused by the internal changes that are taking place. The adolescent must also cope with the conflicts between himself and the society within which he lives. Conscious of a strong desire to conform to the rules and regulations of the social order, he nevertheless feels strong impulses toward rebellion. Aware that he did not create the values and traditions, the mores and the practices he is supposed to adopt, he understandably revolts against them, even though he desperately wants to find his place in the scheme of things, and even more desperately wants to belong.

This is, in literal truth, a conflict of generations. And this rebellion against society has a clear-cut analogue in the adolescent's relationships with his family. It is the same rebellion, the same aggressivity, but in a different setting. It is spurred on by the same impulses that cause a rejection of the social order, but in this case directed against persons whom he is supposed to love and who are supposed to love him. Society is something abstract and somewhat removed from the immediate purview and feelings of the adolescent; but the family is real, it is close, it is immensely important. His own rebellion frightens and alienates him, and at the same time he feels that without it there can be no independence, no self-identity, no style of life that he can call his own, no self-respect. Gone is the warm, comfortable security of happy childhood. In its place comes turbulence and confusion, conflict and uncertainty, doubt and indecision. Longing to achieve manly independence, the adolescent still feels strong impulsions toward dependence and emotional succorance. Anxious for psychological weaning, he still yearns for the warm milk of mother-love. This is the heart of the adolescent problem. This is one of the primary sources of the problems of adolescence. And this in many instances is the background from which the problem adolescent emerges.

This, too, in somewhat broad strokes, is the portrait of the contemporary adolescent, which we can use as a backdrop for our discussion of the dynamics of child-parent relationships.

### THE TASKS OF THE ADOLESCENT

If we are to develop a clear idea of the dynamics of child-parent relationships during the adolescent period, we must consider the tasks which face the adolescent as he follows the rocky road from childhood to adulthood. Without knowing what these tasks are, what responsibilities the youngster must confront as he moves toward the goal of maturity, we cannot possibly understand what is going on between him and other persons in his environment. These relationships have no meaning apart from the social-cultural context in which they develop.

The characteristics of the dynamic factors that determine interpersonal relationships are derived as much from the tasks that the adolescent must face up to as from the nature of the relationships themselves. This would not be so true in a simpler social organization -- such as rural farm life -- where the youngsters often gradually assume the roles and responsibilities of the parents. There would still be tasks to confront, but they would be simplified to an important extent by the lesser demands that such an organization imposes. Contrast this situation with that of the majority of youths who must carve a niche for themselves in a world that is characterized by shifting values, ruthless competition, pluralistic systems of thought and belief, and the constant threat of physical or social disintegration. Here again we see why the adolescent problem of today is not the same as it was a generation ago, and certainly not what it was a hundred years ago.

The basic and most important task of the adolescent is to grow up. As simple and as trite as this statement sounds, it is nevertheless the most profound truth regarding adolescent development. Without a compelling urge to grow up, and in the absence of this achievement, the adolescent cannot become the mature adult he must be if he is to assume unavoidable responsibilities, form satisfying relationships,

fulfill the roles that will be expected of him, or achieve the important goals that he sets for himself. Maturity is the sine qua non of manhood and of womanhood, and the achievement of maturity is the primary task which the adolescent must face resolutely and unflinchingly.

Needless to say, all of the tasks of the adolescent are in some way bound up with the achievement of maturity. This is so because maturity requires the completion of these different tasks. For example, a second principal task of adolescence is the development of independence, and that includes independence of thought, of decision, and of action. It also involves independence of feeling and emotion. To become an adult, the adolescent must free himself from the dependence of childhood, since to remain dependent in this manner is to maintain the status of a child. This is especially true of emotional dependence, since unless the person frees himself from emotional involvements with parents, he will not become free to develop emotional involvements with others, particularly persons of the opposite sex. Thus, a man of twenty-two years of age who still clings emotionally to "Mom," is guilty of what Strecker has called "momism," and will find it impossible to build a healthy emotional bridge between himself and a potential sweetheart or wife. In similar vein, the failure to achieve intellectual or volitional independence will impair the exercise of sound judgment, the making of important decisions, and the realization of personal ambitions and goals.

The third great task confronting the adolescent is the development of a deep sense of personal responsibility, and a corresponding willingness to accept responsibility. Obviously, this requirement is linked to the achievement of independence and maturity. One of the most basic distinctions between the child and the adult is found in the depth and range of responsibilities. We do not attribute a high degree of responsibility to a child for many of his actions, simply because he is immature and does not possess the self determination necessary to full-scale responsibility. Nor do we invest responsibility in the child. We do not allow him to drive an automobile, handle large sums of money, get married, buy a house, vote for political candidates, or decide for himself

what schools he will attend. We recognize that this would be too much responsibility for the young, undeveloped mind of the child. By the same rule, when a person grows up and passes through the transitional period of adolescence, we do expect him to be responsible for his decisions and his behavior, and we do invest him with adult responsibilities. Obviously, then, the irresponsible person of twenty or twenty-five years of age has failed to fulfill this supreme task, and thus cannot be characterized as a mature adult.

Inseparably linked to the development of responsibility is the task of achieving self-discipline. Here again we see how sharply a child differs from an adult. In early childhood rules of conduct are externally applied, and the child is made to do what the parents regard as morally good or socially correct. This has always been recognized as external discipline, as distinct from internal discipline which the adolescent is expected to acquire in the course of development. Internal discipline is what everyone refers to as self-discipline, or self-determination. This is a slow, gradual, and sometimes very painful process, which in many instances is far from complete when the teenager reaches the threshold of adulthood.

Self-discipline is the springboard of responsible action, and one of the surest signs of independence, particularly independence in the area of decisions and behavior. The ability to say "no" at the right time, or "yes" at the right time is the mark of the mature person. Self-discipline has always been recognized as the core of character-formation, and the indispensable ingredient of responsible selfhood. It enables the possessor to accept challenges, to defer gratifications when necessary, and to regulate the course of his own destiny. This again is what maturity means, and without the achievement of this task mature adulthood is never reached.

The growth of self-discipline prepares the adolescent for another task that he must face squarely as he moves toward adulthood, and that is the development of worthwhile goals, and the acquisition of a dependable set of values. Goals and values are so closely allied that the development of the one is intrinsically related to and dependent upon the other. In this phase of growing up, the adolescent is presented with every opportunity to utilize his capacity for self-determination as

well as his sense of responsibility. Sooner or later he must determine the direction of his strivings and thus decide what he is going to become. Should he go to college? Should he take a pre-med course? Should he follow in the footsteps of his father and be a lawyer? Will she embark on a career and defer marriage for an indefinite period? Should she attempt to combine both? Is college important for a girl?

These are all goal-questions -- questions that the adolescent must find an answer to before he embarks on the serious business of adult living. It is answering questions like these that will enable him to project himself into future roles of manhood or womanhood, of fatherhood and motherhood, of doctor, or nurse, or priest, or lawyer, or ne'er-do-well. In this process of crystallizing goals, and projection into adult roles, the adolescent's value system will be a prime determinant. His moral, spiritual, and social values, which have been shifting and taking new form throughout the adolescent period, will impinge directly or indirectly on his choice of a vocation, his attitudes toward marriage, his decisions to enter the religious life, and his aspirations regarding future achievements. The growth of a value-system, therefore, becomes one of the primary tasks of the adolescent period. And in the handling of this task, his relationships with his parents and family will play a decisive role.

Finally, the adolescent must confront the task of achieving self-identity. This is perhaps the most important psychological development of the adolescent period. And in the realization of this basic quality, early interpersonal relationships will play a leading role. Here we see most clearly how important it is to understand the tasks of adolescence in order to grasp the meaning of child-parent relationships. As will become apparent, these relationships are the direct forerunners of self-identity.

Without self-identity, the adolescent remains confused, indecisive, and immature. He finds it difficult to assume responsibility, to be independent, or to utilize the important quality of self-discipline. He cannot formulate clear-cut goals, and finds it impossible to project himself into future roles. His values remain ill-formed and murky, and the future is perceived as a threat rather than as a challenge.

Without self-identity the boundaries of the ego are obscure and poorly defined, with the result that the youngster's relationship to reality becomes vague and uncertain. From this viewpoint, then, self-identity becomes a major task of adolescent growth.

### DYNAMIC FACTORS IN PARENT-CHILD RELATIONSHIPS

Here are the major tasks that face the growing teenager, and that reflect as well as influence the dynamic, changing relationships between him and his parents, or more broadly, his family. These tasks are, of course, inseparably tied in with basic adolescent needs and drives, and it is these factors that play a major role in shaping the pattern of relationships that emerge during the adolescent period.

As a typical example of these complex interrelationships, let us see what the task of self-identity means to the adolescent in terms of the family setting. Self-identity emerges out of and is primarily determined by the achievement of sex-identity, and this hard core of the process in its turn reflects the psychosexual needs and drives of adolescence. In other words, a healthy sex-identity in late adolescence or early adulthood presupposes normal psychosexual development, including a wholesome heterosexual orientation. But this psychosexual development will be influenced to an important extent by the relationships between the youngster and his parents. If the boy identifies healthily with the father, and the girl with the mother, psychosexual development and the achievement of sex-identity are likely to follow a normal course. This will depend upon many other factors, but like-sex identification furnishes a strong push toward sex-identity. This identification will, in turn, help in the rounding out of self-identity.

In this special relationship between parent and child, we encounter a striking example of the dynamics of parent-child relationships. The youngster who is a child at puberty must in the course of a few years become a man or a woman, and his relationships with his parents can provide a headlong push in this direction, or lay the groundwork for sexual immaturity, confusion, and pathology. If the boy identifies



strongly with the dominant mother, the end result will be sexual confusion, effeminacy, or homosexuality. One can see readily enough how this development would be affected by the needs and frustrations in the parents themselves. If the mother has a passive or rejecting mate, or if the husband is deceased or absent from the home for long periods of time, the mother may well turn to the children for the satisfaction of basic needs. This, of course, is the background of "momism" to which we have already made reference.

The dynamics of this relationship are determined also by the adolescent's craving for independence and the corresponding rejection of conformity. As we have noted, the achievement of independence is a primary task of adolescent development, and obviously hinges on this need. Here is the source of a great deal of family conflict, hostility, rebellion, and unhappiness. Most parents seem to have a blind spot where independence is concerned, and know even less when it comes to handling the problems created by it. The reason for this troublesome situation is not only that parents fail to recognize the youngster's need for freedom, but also because their own anxiety about letting the youngster "try his wings" is so great that they do not dare allow any freedom of judgment or action. This anxiety stems from the fear that the youngster will get hurt or into trouble, but also from the suspicion that perhaps they have not done a good enough job in raising the youngster so that he is capable of acting freely.

Some parents experience an almost paralyzing fear when their youngsters go off to college or into the service, because they cannot conceive how Johnny or Mary could possibly get along without them. Teenagers themselves often confirm this lack of faith by their own irresponsible behavior. That some measure of independence must be granted, encouraged, and strengthened throughout the adolescence is a fact beyond dispute; but it has to be accomplished in a context of other healthy parent-child relationships. Thus, weekend trips, the use of the family car, the handling of money, summer jobs away from home, the choice of clothes, staying out late, dating, going steady, choice of girl friends -- these and many more are instances in which the need for independence and the task of becoming independent must be skillfully resolved.

The trick is in finding out how much rope you can let out without getting involved in a hanging.

From this analysis it is obvious that the need for independence, and the achievement of freedom, will be strongly influenced by the relationship that we call discipline. If the parents' own security allows room for some degree of permissiveness and freedom, then their discipline is likely to lead to the tranquility of order that discipline should encourage. Good parental discipline leads to a well-ordered home. On the other hand, if the parents' own inadequacies, insecurities, and anxieties require an authoritarian or punitive type of discipline, there is little room for independence or freedom on the part of the children, and there is bound to be conflict, hostility, and stormy rebellion.

We must remember that hostility and rebellion are always motivated by anger, and anger is the immediate emotional expression of frustration. Thus if the youngster is repeatedly frustrated in his efforts to achieve some independence and freedom, he is going to get angry and rebellious; or, what is much worse, he will develop into a passive, compliant, negative personality who learns only how to scrape and bow before the commands of other persons. If children do not become angry and rebellious in the face of some of the outrageous demands of parents, then something is seriously wrong in their development. Nevertheless, the task of achieving self-discipline requires parental discipline, and, therefore, healthy parent-child relationships must leave room for wise and affectionate control on the part of the parents.

The dynamics of this relationship will be affected also by the needs in the adolescent for security and love. Despite the insistent urge to grow up, to become free and independent, and to achieve his own self-identity, the teenager is not yet an adult, nor yet an independent person, and thus deeply requires the security afforded by parental love. The achievement of self-identity, freedom, and independence must be a slow and a gradual process, not a sharp and incisive wrenching of the child from the home and family. We see what happens to young children when they are separated from parents by death or divorce; and the situation is not much better when they are sent off at this tender age to boarding school or minor

seminary. Youngsters of thirteen, fourteen, and fifteen years of age need the emotional warmth and security of the family, even though at times they try desperately to run away from it. No parent substitute or father figure, and certainly no organization or institution, can possibly take the place of the family in fulfilling the needs of the adolescent. The rationalizations used by parents for sending a child away during the early years of adolescence are quickly dispelled by clinical experience in dealing with youngsters who have been the victims of this type of parental neglect.

When the teenager is loved, accorded a measure of freedom and responsibility, disciplined in a sensible and respectful way, encouraged to grow up and to achieve self-identity, he in turn will love and respect his parents, enjoy family life, and achieve a healthy, mature adulthood. In this way the circle of parent-child relationships is successfully completed, and the dynamics of the relationships oriented to a skillful and intelligent solution of the adolescent problem as well as the problems of adolescence.

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# COLLEGE SELECTION, JOB PLACEMENT, AND OCCUPATIONAL ADJUSTMENT

by

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This paper is addressed to three special problems of the adolescent developmental period: college selection, job placement, and occupational adjustment. It will offer a conceptual framework for enabling schools and students to deal realistically with the problems and will suggest some specific practices. Detailed descriptions of programs and services will not be offered since these are readily available in numerous textbook and journal articles within the fields of guidance and counseling.

The term "the school" will appear throughout this paper. As employed, the term represents a vital agency created by a community to provide certain experiences needed by its youth in their transition from dependent childhood to mature independent adulthood. The school is not only answerable to its community, but is also alterable by it. As this paper proceeds, it will be evident that the school, in this context, is only one type of acculturative agency and that other agents and agencies are able to perform particular and valuable functions needed by young people in accomplishing their growth.

Numerous assumptions concerning the effects of school and society upon young people are currently popular. The number of suggestions concerning the functions of schools increases constantly. From this tangled web three proposals have been selected for examination and structuring in a framework which can be used by schools to specify their goals and purposes in a realistic sort of way. It is incumbent upon the school to make such a determination before it can presume to help young people resolve their special problems. It is not suggested that this is the only set of assumptions which the school can use to establish a realistic frame of reference.

The selection of this set was influenced by the fact that it reaches across major fields of inquiry and thus constitutes a comprehensive structure.

The three assumptions are:

- (1) The development of an adequate self-concept for each young person is a major responsibility of the school.
- (2) Because society does not provide worthwhile goals or many opportunities, school is often not meaningful to young people; boys in particular.
- (3) In order to compete for the energies of young people, the school should provide activities and establish rewards for achievement that bring public recognition and the personal reward of doing something for the school.

The writings of Super lend rich support to the first assumption. In his book, The Psychology of Careers, Super states that the youth who leaves school with a concept of self ill-formed or relatively untested by reality finds it difficult to get a job; particularly a job which is likely to afford him with appropriate outlets for his interests and abilities.<sup>1</sup> According to Combs, people learn their self-concept from the ways in which they have been treated by those who surround them.<sup>2</sup> This conception of the outcome of education places as much or more burden on how learning takes place as on what is learned. In order to establish curricula which will develop people as well as to foster ideas, the school must certainly give careful consideration to the means as well as the ends. When school experiences are evaluated in terms of self-concepts, current measures of success such as test scores, alone, are not sufficient to furnish an adequate image of the person. Counseling, of course, can and should be employed to help the maturing student to become increasingly aware of his perceptions of self; but counseling can only clarify, it cannot create the self. The problem confronting the school as to how it might best promote the development of each individual's self-concept is indeed troublesome. Perhaps a partial solution will be found in suggestions such as those

being promoted by Trump<sup>3</sup> and others. An even larger part of the solution will be discovered in the realization that there are other agents and agencies which are better equipped than the schools to provide some of the needed experiences.

When the school understands that it does not need to accomplish the entire task by itself, it will be able to identify better the areas of learning experience which it can provide best. Dr. John Fischer, recognized as a leader in the field of education, has recently stressed this need of the school to reconsider the nature of its institutional role.<sup>4</sup>

The second assumption, that school is often not meaningful, is forcefully expressed in Goodman's book, Growing Up Absurd.<sup>5</sup> Goodman contends that our culture does not provide the kinds of jobs needed for meaningful, satisfying careers. He asserts that this condition applies to men in particular. If this condition were generally prevalent, the reality needed for the testing of self would not exist and youth would indeed be doomed to the fate proclaimed in the title of Goodman's book. Along with Goodman, we recognize that some values long held in esteem by our society are losing their worth. The task of the school, however, is to understand the kinds of change taking place, to identify the values arising in new or different kinds of occupations and to help youth prepare to perform these kinds of work honestly and well.

The third assumption is that the school must learn to compete in new ways for the energies of youth. Coleman, a keen proponent of this belief, postulates that school is of desperate importance to the young child because it helps him to acquire the skills he needs for controlling his environment and assuring his place in it.<sup>6</sup> By adolescence, the growing person has gained sufficient competence to become independent; but in our society he is deemed too immature to be permitted direct participation in its operation. His dependence upon school is further reduced by his lack of commitment to a specific occupation. With school having lost its urgent importance to him, the youth seeks satisfaction in hedonistic pursuits and, according to Coleman, the school must use devices which the adolescent can identify as satisfying to him in order for it to maintain an important position in his life. He specifically suggests that the school might employ a system of interscho-

lastic competition in games such as strategy or mathematics or English.

The problem of motivation has long been troublesome and Coleman's suggestions are certainly intriguing. In order for the student's experiences to provide meaningful learning, however, he must become personally involved in them. The experiences must be real and must let him become a responsible partner in the learning process.

If the school can specify its role and comprehend accurately the changes of society, it will be able to function in ways which are clear and meaningful to itself and its students. In such a setting, the school would become so important to students that there would be less need for extrinsic motivation. Consequently, the function of the school would be to help the student give direction to his own intrinsic motivation.

A closer examination of some relationships among the three propositions serves to clarify the role of the school in helping young people resolve their special problems. If the foregoing assumptions were to be accepted uncritically, as stated, the task of the school might seem altogether disheartening. In this setting, the school would be responsible for helping young people develop an adequate concept despite the seeming lack of worthwhile goals in the culture and regardless of the disinterest of students in the activities of the school. What a dismal task the school would have under such circumstances.

On the other hand, if the assumptions are analyzed with discernment, a distinctly different conclusion emerges. In this altered setting, the school is recognized as one of the agencies charged with the responsibility of helping young people resolve their special problems, but it is not charged with sole responsibility. In turn, the school focuses upon understanding the changes in society and helps its students grow into the new society. Finally, the school adapts its practices so as to involve students as active, responsible participants in the entire process of learning. Operating in this realistic setting, the school is ready to help its students achieve independent realistic growth in solving their special problems.

Consideration will now be given to some specific problems encountered by youth in their career development. Some ways of helping them work out solutions to the problems will



be suggested. Finally, attention will be given to the particular obligations of the schools in meeting the problems to which this paper is addressed.

The importance of work in the life of each person does not need to be justified here. Instead, it is possible to proceed immediately with an examination of the problems confronting young people in their vocational planning. One paramount obstacle is that young people simply do not develop the capacity for planning as early as we might wish. According to Super and Overstreet ninth-grade boys are not sufficiently mature to do realistic planning.<sup>7</sup> As a consequence, they suggest that schools should work with students at this level to help them learn how to plan. The preceding finding has been confirmed by O'Hara and Tiedeman.<sup>8</sup> They report that aptitude is relatively poorly conceived throughout grades nine to twelve, even by academically able boys. Moreover, they add that it is not until grades eleven to twelve that work values play an important part in boys' vocational planning. Despite students' lack of readiness to do realistic vocational planning, the schools in our country are so organized that vocational decisions frequently have to be made by the end of junior high school, and the trend is to require important vocational decisions even earlier. Unless careful recognition is taken by the schools of the limited planning readiness of adolescents, decisions will replace plans, and the school rather than the student and his family will be making important career decisions.

Any vocational planning done now must take into account the rapid changes occurring in fields of employment. The applications of new knowledge in all fields of work is quickly modifying existing jobs, eliminating some, and creating others. Wrenn<sup>9</sup> predicts that by 1970, one occupational choice will not be sufficient for a life time.

Schools cannot be expected to help students prepare for specific jobs which have not yet come into being, but schools can design curricula which will enable young people to plan flexibly. Schools must make a full effort to understand the changes which are taking place and provide experiences which are relevant to them. This is no small task, for it is now estimated that the amount of man's knowledge is doubling

every ten years.<sup>10</sup> Yet, the school does seem to be the agency which is best designed to seek out the direction of change and to help young people be ready to meet and even extend the change.

One particular problem which at this time represents a known factor in the career of every young man is his military obligation. Acceptance of this factor as a reality has not easily been achieved by us. While our conception of our idealized national image permits us to view ourselves as brave people, we do not visualize ourselves as warlike. It offends us to alter our self-image so that we can accept personal participation in a permanent military effort. Denying the necessity of such a condition, however, would be useless evasion. We can meet the demand better by understanding the necessity for the change and by incorporating into the dimensions of reality for each young male student his need to plan how he will fulfill his military obligation. The information needed by young men is readily available through recruiting offices and the headquarters of military districts, and every school can obtain the latest facts by maintaining regular contact with the military representatives.

Young women require special help for their planning, too. It is estimated that women will constitute more than one third of the labor force in 1970 and that most of the women will be married. Wrenn suggests that in view of this knowledge school counselors must take a girl's occupational planning as seriously when her first objective is marriage as they do when her first goal is a vocational career.<sup>11</sup>

Another practical problem confronting youth and counselors results from the attempts of special interest groups to persuade schools that it is their duty to impress ("guide" is the term of persuasion) youth into particular occupations. Undoubtedly, every profession and skilled occupation needs more talented workers; but it is the right of youth to make their decisions in light of information, not propaganda. It is the obligation of the school to safeguard this right.

In meeting our responsibilities, we need to be aware of our own limitations. More needs to be learned about patterns of vocational development. Better ways of collecting, organizing, and disseminating occupational information are needed.

The occupational problems of slow learners must be met. In the following portion of this paper, attention will be given to some ways in which youth can be helped to grow toward independence as they attempt to solve their special problems. Two means of assisting in this development will be presented: school informational services, and school-community activities.

Students ought to have all the data concerning themselves that can be gathered and a full spectrum of current occupational and educational information. In order to relate these two kinds of data purposefully, the school will need to regard its function as being devoted to gathering information for students rather than about them. Responsibilities for disseminating the information must be clearly defined. We know from experience that the task cannot be well accomplished by limiting the function to counselors. Neither is it satisfactory to assign such vital information to optional units of the curriculum. A present practice which seems promising is the use of library services for aiding students. This is a logical effort and students and librarians have found it satisfactory. Without question, however, the school will need to use data processing devices to fulfill the requirement of supplying wide-spread, up-to-date information. The constant changes in opportunities and requirements simply cannot be handled by the conventional methods now in use. Information, however, is but the raw material for the process of planning. Therefore, every student needs to develop competence in the skills of the process.

The planning skills can be taught in every classroom and throughout the extra-curricular programs. The intimately personal involvement required in making critical decisions can be learned in counseling. The kind of planning needed for career decisions apparently is done best in individual counseling rather than in group settings; and at the same time that the student makes his plans, he can learn the technique.<sup>12</sup> While the school can provide the experiences needed for career planning, other groups are particularly well equipped to provide extended experience in social relationships.

Organizations such as the Scouts, the Catholic Youth Organization, the B'nai B'rith Youth Organization, and the Red

Shield Boys' Clubs come readily to mind because of their well-known national programs. Equally fine work is being done by local community centers, church and synagogue centers, and philanthropic societies. The Catholic Youth Organization, considered as a prototype, illustrates ways in which youth serving agencies provide real life learning experiences.

From the level of the local club up to the top council, the keynote of operation is the assumption of responsibility by youth under trained adult guidance. The young people choose their own leaders, design their programs, and assume responsibility for outcomes. This vigorous program is designed in accordance with adult ideals, but it is conducted in terms of youth interests. As a result, the youth learn about life from life. Such organizational programs are effective because they do not depend upon artificial stimulation. The value to the youth is real. The school that understands the value of such experiences does not need to imitate or compete in those areas and can concentrate its energies upon its own tasks.

Work experience is another means through which youth achieve personal and social growth. The experience can be gained in part-time work which the student arranges for himself or through work-study programs arranged by school-community cooperation. In either event the outcome is added maturity for the student.

During the present school year, a survey of student reactions to work experiences was conducted in three Baltimore City Public High Schools. The study was limited to seniors in the final semester. Some of them were enrolled in work-study programs, but most of them had found employment on their own.

The students reported a variety of reasons for wanting to work, but the most prominent reason was the need to earn money. This was not unexpected; but of particular interest was the intended use of the money. In nearly every instance, the response indicated the student intended to use the money in a way that would let him assume more responsibility for himself and be less dependent upon his family. The study also investigated the effects of the work experience upon school performance. In general, the responses indicated that the learnings gained through work were exactly the kind

approved by school, and that the school work and attitudes were beneficially affected. Sample responses are quoted for illustration:

"It made me feel that I could get along with people better."

"It made me realize that I would need to work harder in school in order to qualify for the job I want."

"It made me grow up a little more."

"It made me proud to be on my own and have more to do with running my own life."

"It made me appreciate the value of a dollar."

and finally --

"It made me try to improve in school. I don't want to work like that the rest of my life."

The importance which the boys and girls attached to their work experiences is similar to that reported by Slocum in a survey done in the state of Washington.<sup>13</sup>

Parenthetically, it is interesting to note that fifty-five per cent of the students in the Baltimore survey had had part-time work experience and in one of the schools the total was eighty-five per cent. This certainly does not support the popular stereotype of American youth which condemns them as being soft, irresponsible, and pleasure-seeking. Nor does it suggest that artificial devices are needed to make school important to youth, at least, not for those who have the opportunity to work. What is suggested by the findings is that work experiences enhances the maturity of youth and gives a new importance to school.

It remains to the school however, to assume responsibility for helping youth synthesize their experiences into realistic life plans.

In assuming this responsibility, the school needs to be

aware of the implications of realistic career planning. Earlier, reference was made to the practice of requiring students to make career decisions before they had developed the maturity for doing so. It seems that some kinds of professional careers require a background of preparation that makes early training mandatory. Faced with this dilemma, the school needs to be particularly careful that the early decisions made by students are not irreversible. The school also needs to exercise considerable caution in order to be sure that the individual retains the right to make his own career decisions. The notion has become increasingly popular in recent years that school should identify capable students as early as possible. This is a laudable undertaking. What is not so praiseworthy, however, is the too frequent practice of prescribing a fixed curriculum for such students. Such a practice has the effect of narrowing opportunities and of making career-type decisions for them. Surely the capable students derive no benefit from being excluded from the planning process. Moreover, the inclusion of some students as the ones to receive professional career training automatically excludes others. No brief is presented here for abolishing predictive criteria, but a strong plea is expressed to include students actively in every step of the planning process and to delay critical career decisions as long as possible. We would probably agree with Carlyle who is quoted as having said upon the occasion of his installation as rector of the University of Edinburgh in 1866, "...a man... is born to expend every particle of strength that God Almighty has given him, in doing the work he finds he is fit for; to stand up to it to the last breath of his life; and to do his best."<sup>14</sup> We ought, likewise, to agree with the declaration of the Executive Council of the American Personnel and Guidance Association, "Freedom to choose one's life work is basic to our democratic society and is necessary to the fullest possible growth of individuals."<sup>15</sup> Career planning to be considered realistic cannot be done in lesser terms.

The provisions for the planning ought to be continuous, extending throughout the student's school life. At the present time, this is more likely to be done for college-bound students than for others. In the earlier grades, they are selected for

special curricular treatment. In high school, career conferences, visits to college campuses, testing programs, and other services are provided to facilitate their movement toward college. Such assistance is altogether proper, but it is equally fitting that similar assistance be given all other students. As is done for the college-bound, provisions for guidance and counseling should be available to other students in all grades, beginning in the elementary schools. At the time they are ready to enter work, counseling and job placement services should be used to make the transition as successful as possible. The Baltimore City Public Schools operate according to such a plan. The college-bound students in that city are helped directly by the counselors in their own schools. Those who desire employment receive additional assistance from the counselors of the system's central placement service. The placement counselors who are specialized in their work interview each senior student who wants assistance in securing a job and review his cumulative record. They also maintain continuous contact with public and private employers. This enables them to know about job opportunities and specific requirements. Through their close personal contacts with both students and employers, the counselors render maximum service to each. For the student, the transition takes place in a way which is familiar to him, through planning with a counselor. In addition, he has the assurance that the plan is being developed particularly to help him and not simply to fill a job.

A similar service is available for slow-learning students and for those who do not complete high school.

Follow-up contacts are maintained with the students as they go onto their jobs for one year, at three intervals, and they are entitled to counseling assistance for the same period. Thereafter, if they wish, the services of the system's counselors for adults can be utilized.

Employers have expressed the opinion that the plan contributes materially to helping students make a successful transition from school to work.

Whatever the plan of the school might be for helping students make and carry out their plans, recognition must be taken of the limits of responsibility.

The school is limited, in a material sense, by its size, geographic location, staff, and economic resources. Any plan for assisting students must take such factors into consideration. A larger limitation is one that is self-imposed: the respect for the rights of the individual student and his family. It is ultimately the right of each student to make his own final decision. We must not forbid him that right; we cannot deny him the responsibility.

This paper has dealt with the need of the school to view itself and the community realistically. The task of helping students find jobs or reach college does not depend on learning special techniques or devising unique programs of assistance. When the school and the community agree that the task is to help all youth and when they combine their total resources for this purpose, the techniques of assistance will follow naturally.

#### FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Donald E. Super, The Psychology of Careers (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1957), p. 104.

<sup>2</sup>Arthur W. Combs, "The Self-Concept -- A New Horizon in Field Research," The Nebraska Guidance Digest (March, 1961), p. 4.

<sup>3</sup>J. Lloyd Trump and Dorsey Baynham, Focus on Change (Chicago: Rand McNally and Co., 1961).

<sup>4</sup>John H. Fischer, "Our Changing Conception of Education," Phi Delta Kappan, XLII (October, 1960), 16-19.

<sup>5</sup>Paul Goodman, Growing Up Absurd (New York: Random House, 1956).

<sup>6</sup>James S. Coleman, "Social Climates in High Schools," Cooperative Research Monograph No. 4 (Washington: U. S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, 1961).

<sup>7</sup>Donald E. Super and Phoebe L. Overstreet, The Vocational Maturity of Ninth Grade Boys (New York: Teachers College, Columbia University, 1960).

<sup>8</sup>Robert P. O'Hara and David P. Tiedeman, "Vocational Self-Concept in Adolescence," Journal of Counseling Psychology No. 6 (Winter, 1959), 292-301.

<sup>9</sup>C. Gilbert Wrenn, The Counselor in a Changing World,



A Preliminary Report of the Project on Guidance in American Schools (Washington: American Personnel and Guidance Association, 1961).

<sup>10</sup>Ibid.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 6.

<sup>12</sup>Floyd H. Allport, "The Influence of the Group Upon Association and Thought," in P. Hare, E. F. Borgatta, and R. F. Bales, Small Groups (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1955).

<sup>13</sup>W. L. Slocum, "They Find Their Niche," Washington Education (November, 1954), Reprint.

<sup>14</sup>Charles W. Eliot, "The Value During Education of the Life-Career Motive," in Meyer Bloomfield, Readings in Vocational Guidance (New York: Ginn and Co., 1915), p. 12.

<sup>15</sup>Executive Council of the American Personnel and Guidance Association, A Statement of Policy Concerning the Nation's Human Resources Problem (Washington: American Personnel and Guidance Association, December 12, 1957).

## SOME MEDICAL ASPECTS OF ADOLESCENCE<sup>1</sup>

by

Felix P. Heald

Adolescence is a time of rapid change. Physiological, psychological, and intellectual areas all participate in these changes, and there is a significant correlation and dependency of one upon the other. Furthermore, these changes do not always progress in a parallel fashion. Physical development may progress rapidly while emotional development may lag in the same adolescent.

The most obvious changes occur in growth, with rapid changes in linear height and body mass. In general, the adolescent grows caudad-cephalad; that is, the distal extremities grow rapidly first and then growth progresses towards the trunk and the trunk participates in the latter part of the adolescent growth spurt. The timing of the adolescent growth spurt varies widely, but once it is begun there is a predictable change of events in terms of linear growth and osseous differentiation. In general, girls begin their adolescent growth spurt two years before boys. Their linear spurt is less intense than in the male. At the time of the adolescent girl's first menstrual period the velocity of growth, in terms of linear height, is already on the wane. In general, girls tend to add subcutaneous fat while adolescent boys lose both subcutaneous fat and total body fat. Sexual maturation in the adolescent and the adolescent growth spurt are closely allied. That is, if the physician knows the stage of sexual maturation, he then has a reasonable estimate of what stage of growth is present in that particular adolescent. Thus, by using a rating scale for sexual maturation, one at the same time has some estimate of growth potential. The more advanced the sexual maturation during the growth spurt, the less growth potential remains for that individual.

Nutrition in adolescence also shows considerable sex

difference. The adolescent girl has her peak caloric intake about the time of her first menstrual period and requirements for total calories tend to decline after this. This peak in caloric requirements at menarche is also accompanied by high requirements for both protein and calcium in the adolescent girl. In contrast, the adolescent boy requires a much higher caloric intake, which reaches its peak in the sixteenth and seventeenth year. For example, the adolescent boy at the age sixteen requires approximately 3,500 calories, while the adolescent girl of the same age requires approximately 2,300 calories.

There are few diseases which are peculiar to adolescents. However, certain diseases which are common in children or adults require different handling in the context of adolescence. In other words, the treatment for obesity, dysmenorrhea, anemia, hypertension, etc., requires specific knowledge of the physiology and of the different causes for such diseases during this age span. Furthermore, we must all be aware of the rapid and stormy emotional development during adolescence. This is a time when adolescents are seeking their own identity and independence, their own life, and confidence in their ability to deal effectively with people around them. Their progress is often not smooth, and their progress towards maturity waxes and wanes with obstacles and conflicts which confront them. A sympathetic approach, with the ability to listen to their difficulties, is often the best that we educators, counselors, and physicians may offer to them.

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1. This lecture was essentially a report of a series of studies made with adolescents. The results were presented on slides and discussed at length with the participants. Because of the nature of the talk, only a summary is given here.--Editor

## WORK AND THE WAY OF LIFE

by

John F. Kinnane

Why people work and how they choose the form of work to which they devote their lives are questions vital not only to vocational counselors but to the whole of society. There are, of course, many ready answers to these questions. Men work to earn a living, and indeed for many people the inquiry into why people work goes no further. The average worker feels he must possess certain things in life: car, washing machine, home, television set, and so on. To get the money to pay for these "necessities," he goes out to work. To millions of people (including the classical economists) the logic of this explanation is so compelling as to constitute a sufficient answer.

Many of us are not satisfied with such a simple answer. The sociologist, the psychologist, the theologian, and other thoughtful observers contribute more complex and fundamental reasons couched in their own terminology and classifications. Bertrand Russell, a philosopher of some repute, has an excellent chapter entitled "Work" in his well-written little book called the Conquest of Happiness. Russell says, "continuity of purpose is one of the most essential ingredients of happiness in the long run and for most men this comes chiefly through their work." He goes on to state succinctly the basic problem in achieving happiness through work:

Human beings differ profoundly in regard to the tendency to regard their lives as a whole. To some men it is natural to do so, and essential to happiness to be able to do so with some satisfaction. To others life is a series of detached incidents without directed movement and without unity. I think the former sort are more likely to achieve

happiness than the latter, since they will gradually build up those circumstances from which they can derive contentment and self-respect, whereas the others will be blown about by the winds of circumstances now this way, now that, without ever arriving at any haven. The habit of viewing life as a whole is an essential part both of wisdom and of the true morality, and is one of the things which ought to be encouraged in education. Consistent purpose is not enough to make life happy, but it is an almost indispensable condition of a happy life, and consistent purpose embodies itself mainly in work.

Super (as a vocational psychologist) has attempted to simplify the reasons which have been reported by other students of work and has attempted to organize them in a simple and meaningful way. He finds that there are three major needs for which satisfaction is sought in work: human relations, the intrinsic aspects of work, and livelihood. Primary in satisfying human relationships is recognition as a person, particularly in modern living with its anonymity and loss of identity. This depersonalization which is becoming increasingly characteristic of modern automated industry often makes the individual feel lost in the large and impersonal machine of industrial enterprise. Millions of workers live for the weekend because their jobs offer them no chance to be independent, to have some degree of autonomy, to exercise some control over their own behavior, actions, and activities. The newspapers are daily full of the battle between employee and employer in which the prize for the worker is what he considers to be fair treatment. What appears to underlie the headlines is the demand of the human being for consideration of himself as a unique individual. Reynolds and Shister, in their survey of the job attitudes of semi-skilled workers, quote a pressman as saying: "they treated me swell when I was sick in the hospital for seventeen weeks last year. I had been there only a short time when I got sick but they paid my hospitalization and kept my job open for me."

In another context people seek work that is intrinsically

interesting, and where there is opportunity for self-expression; what an individual may mean by "self-expression" and what he may mean by a "satisfying work situation" depends, however, on the point of view. Reynolds and Shister report an interview with a screw-machine operator who is discussing variety on the job: "On my former job I assembled the same thing day after day. It drives you nuts after a while. On my present job there's lots of change. I don't make the same screw all the time. I have to feed the machine with different stock and the product varies all the time in size."

It seems to be clear, therefore, that work is a good thing, for that which enables us to live must be good. Work, as the dictionary says, is the exertion of energy physical or mental. We generally distinguish between the exertion of energy for the sake of pleasure or recreation, and the same kind of exertion when it is made for securing the means of living. One of the interesting phenomena of modern American society is that the exertion of energy for play appears at times almost to surpass the exertion of energy for securing such things as food, clothing, and shelter. The problem of the "Leisure State" involves the religious view of work which is generally not touched upon by psychologists, economists, sociologists, counselors, personnel research workers, and public opinion interviewers. The theologian states that, if work can be prayer, then it follows that no form of necessary work can in itself be degrading. However, it is a phenomenon well known to psychologists and sociologists that none of us has any difficulty in placing all occupations in a prestige hierarchy with the occupation of psychiatrist somewhere near the top, and casual laborers somewhere near the bottom. One particular prestige scale developed by Stubbins indicates that the following five occupations are generally considered to have about the same amount of "prestige": teacher Hebrew school, estimator construction work, draftsman mechanical, secretary administrator, accountant junior. Furthermore, "psychiatrist" gets the highest rank, with "porter, or clean-up man" at the bottom. One thing seems clear and that is that the idea that physical labor is a bad thing seems to be quite prevalent. Implicit in the battle of electricians in New York City for a fifteen-hour week is the notion that manual work is of

itself an impersonal drudgery and should be reduced to a minimum. The religious view of work, however, holds that no kind of physical labor, absolutely no kind whatsoever, is incapable of being sanctified and enobled. The theologian starts with this doctrine, i.e., that because physical labor is necessary for the preservation and continuance of human life, then it is capable of being holy and sacred. Physical labor then should be included and sanctified rather than excluded and degraded despite the apparent sub-human drudgery imposed by automation, which destines millions of people to semi-skilled short cycle operations. The worker sees work as drudgery and seeks to reduce it to a minimum, looking forward to the weekends and to leisure for all the enjoyable exercise needed for mind and body. There appears to be a contradiction here, for if physical labor is bad and therefore to be eliminated from work because it is derogatory then it should rightly be eliminated from play also, which is manifestly absurd.

What seems to be important here is that it is not physical labor which is bad but it is simply the fact that man's needs for human relations on the job, for recognition as a person, for some autonomy and control over his own work activity, for fair treatment, for status, for work that is to some extent intrinsically interesting have been largely denied in many plants. Those who look to the "Leisure State" as the summum bonum simply turn their backs on the fact that it is not labor in itself which is sub-human drudgery but rather it is the conditions under which the labor is done. Production of things needed for human life is both honorable and holy. There are no exceptions, not even domestic drudgery which is the chief target for much of our television advertising, destined as it is to freeing the housewife for "higher things."

What does this discussion on work mean for counseling in schools and colleges? It may be clear immediately that counseling involves a little more than the commonly held view which is characterized by the young man who comes in for vocational counseling and says, "I want to take some aptitude tests to find out what I'm best suited for." There is a broader view.

- (1) Vocational choice is a life-long process and is not a

single event. Work is a way of life and the choosing of work involves a life-long series of immediate decisions made, as Bertrand Russell indicates, in the light of an overall goal. The religious view of work would put this overall general goal sub specie aeternitatis.

- (2) The process of vocational choice and adjustment consists of decisions, which like all our other life decisions are never purely rational. If our decisions about our vocation were purely rational then vocational guidance and counseling would simply consist of a mathematical matching of men and jobs. Every decision we make involves a complex of factors which includes the values that dominate and motivate our lives, the basic attitude toward work which we got from key figures in our lives, the prejudices and stereotyped concepts we have of work, our own view of ourselves (our self-concept), and the overall cultural tradition of individual enterprise and self-improvement. Counseling, then, must take cognizance of the fact that every decision is made, not only in the light of the objective facts of the situation, but also of the human being's perception of those facts and of his current needs.
- (3) The growth of counseling psychology received its major impetus from the emphasis upon the total person in vocational guidance. There can perhaps be no vocational problem apart from a personal problem. An immature person will have an immature view of the world of work. Vocational counseling then is not a process of solving problems but of helping the individual to become better able to solve all future problems. The total development of the individual is involved in all vocational guidance. The stuff of counseling involves the capacities, the interests, and the opportunities of the individual and also all of his emotionalized attitudes which often interfere with rational choice. Poor choices are made when the individual's mind is crowded with irrelevancies involving his self-percepts and his attitudes toward occupa-



tions.

- (4) Vocational choices and adjustments are complex cyclic events, recurring as phases in the long process of vocational development. It would be a gross oversimplification to see vocational development as simply a series of decisions and vocational counseling as simply a method of facilitating these discrete decisions. The choices involved in work mean very different things at different stages of life. To the high school senior choice simply means a preference. To the junior in college a choice means a preference which he has acted upon and finds himself implementing it in a five-year academic program. To the fifty-year-old man choice means the adventure of moving ahead and taking risks or staying where he is and maintaining his security.
- (5) To some extent the choosing of work as a way of life is irreversible. Considerable attention has been given to career patterns based on the assumption that the best way to understand what an individual will do in the future is to find out what he did in the past. Counseling then becomes an analysis of the sequence of events of the development of the individual's characteristics, recurring themes and underlying trends and these are abstracted to predict the probable future development of the individual. Sociologists and psychologists are concerned with the identification of common career patterns which might provide a framework of expectations concerning the career patterns of various sub-groups and to study the effects of certain potent economic, psychological, and social forces upon these patterns.
- (6) Super, Miller and Form, Davidson and Anderson, Ginzberg, and many others have attempted to provide us with a framework for considering life stages in the process of the individual's personal and vocational growth and development. The growth stage is seen as those early years where the basic general trends of development are established. The exploration stage, occurring between the ages of roughly

twelve and twenty-two, is generally described as a period in which the individual graduates from fantasy thinking about work through a tentative period in which fantasy and reality intermingle, and graduates ultimately to a realistic view of his own interests, traits, aptitudes, and value system. The establishment stage in personal and vocational development represents the adult period of life when the individual, through trial-and-error experiences in earlier jobs and under the pressure of social and economic influences, finally establishes himself in some area of work endeavor. At this point he begins to identify himself with a particular job or occupation. The maintenance stage represents the middle years or late adulthood when the individual works through, sometimes with success and satisfaction, sometimes with failure and perhaps resignation, his career and integrates his work with his total way of life. The retirement stage represents the period when man faces the transition from work to retirement, feels that his abilities are declining, adjusts to the changing opportunities for expressing himself and braces himself to meet new demands.

There is a danger that these stages may be reified where in fact they are simply intended as a set of expectations against which to interpret the individual's unique career pattern. The combined efforts of psychology, sociology, and other disciplines have emphasized the fact that work is a way of life, and the choice of an occupation is an attempt to implement the self-image. Hearnshaw characterizes the occupation as "the most nearly dominant single influence in a man's life." Work molds the individual's attitudes and values and largely determines his style of living. Work and occupation, Super indicates, play a major part in determining a person's values, attitudes, status in society, and mode of living. Certainly, values and attitudes and other personal characteristics are determinants of the chosen occupation, but on the other hand these very values and attitudes are in part determined by the occupation. Work, then, is not merely a means of

earning a living but also constitutes a way of life. Man is a person and, therefore, requires more than food, clothing and shelter. He demands that kind of food, that kind of clothing, and that kind of shelter which conform to the uniqueness of his personality. The only thing that man would appear to get without labor is the air that he breathes. If man did not have a soul, it would be possible to build communes in which he could be fed, clothed, and housed in regimented herds and hives. A true knowledge of the nature of work and its role in the life of the individual would help to avoid the evil described by Pius XI in Quadragesimo Anno: "In this age of mechanization the human person becomes merely a more perfect tool in industrial production and a perfected tool for mechanized warfare." It seems to be clear also that if one accepts the religious view of work and of man's nature, one is compelled to take a radically different view of vocational guidance. A commonly stated goal of counseling is to help the individual to get established and get ahead; the goal might well be tempered with a little sense of getting Heavenward.

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# AN APPLICATION OF A GENERAL MODEL OF PSYCHOLOGICAL CONFLICT TO THE PROBLEM OF DELINQUENCY

by

Antanas Suziedelis

In preparing a paper for a workshop of this nature the lecturer at once finds himself in conflict. Keeping in mind the general purposes of the workshop, he might wish to present a comprehensive review of the subject; yet with the wide and complex topic at hand this would be quite impossible in a single presentation. On the other hand, he might want to select some one specific aspect of the problem and consider it in depth with a view of making a novel contribution; such a course, however, would undoubtedly fail to meet the varying interests and purposes of the participants. A compromise is clearly needed; here it will take the form of an exposition of an approach to the understanding of delinquency. The treatment of the subject will be general and admittedly schematic, with a selected emphasis not on analyzing the complex but on ordering the simple.

In areas of study encumbered with apparent multiplicity and diversity of phenomena, psychology has been served well by conceptual models which have often facilitated clarification of the phenomena themselves and have made possible their orderly investigation. It is submitted here that delinquency is such an encumbered area, and that it would be of benefit for order and clarity to select some conceptual model to follow in our consideration of this topic.

## A GENERAL MODEL OF PSYCHOLOGICAL CONFLICT

The model selected for our purposes is not new -- it is a model of conflict,<sup>1, 2, 3</sup> defined here simply as the meeting of two opposing psychological forces. Since the opposition

of forces always results in some nullification of their effects to produce some degree of inaction, we can logically distinguish the two forces in a given situation of conflict by selecting one to be labeled as the action-generating force and the other as action-inhibiting. In this sense, when considering psychological conflict in general we can speak of two kinds of psychological forces.

To the extent that all human activity is goal-directed in that it is always in some fashion purposeful, we can further define the action-generating forces as approach forces, i.e., tendencies of the individual to act toward attainment of goals set before him by his physical, psychological, societal constitution. This broad definition includes everything that is commonly meant by the terms need, drive, interest, inclination, appetite, aspiration, motive, etc. No distinction is made here between those approach tendencies which are basically innate (e.g., hunger, sexual drive, rest, escape from physical injury) and those which are learned (e.g., need of approval, status, security, comfort). Nor is a distinction necessary for our purposes between those tendencies which are common to all persons and those peculiar to one culture, one social class, one group or one particular individual.

It is important here to add one note on the nature of approach tendencies as defined: insofar as every approach force, when acted upon, naturally leads to the embracing of the appropriate goal, approach behavior is of its nature rewarding and, therefore, tends to be repeated.

The action-inhibiting forces, or, more simply, restraining forces are those which limit, counteract, control the approach tendencies. They may be considered to be of two kinds. First, there are the external restraining forces; those which derive directly from some agent outside the individual affected by them, e.g., the "do not enter" sign on one-way streets, the law of the Catholic Church ruling out the eating of meat on Fridays. The internal restraining forces, on the other hand, are those which derive their immediate impetus from the individual himself. We are not only told what to do and what not to do, but we also tell ourselves what we "should," "ought," or "may" do or not do. Indeed, in normal adult life it is almost exclusively the internal forces, and

not the external, that guide and control behavior, because the very acceptance of external restraints in adult life presupposes internal control. There is nothing to prevent a person from violating the one-way street rule except his own conviction that adherence to the rule is necessary, and nothing to prevent a Catholic from eating meat on Friday unless he inwardly accepts the authority of the Church.

It is obvious that an individual is not born with a finished set of internal restraints. In infancy, indeed, there is no such set at all, and all controls at that stage are external, viz., the parental rules. In the course of development of the individual, there must then occur some transition from the external to the internal, some process by which the external controls are replaced by, or become, the internal restraints. This process of translation will be termed here as internalization of controls. Whether or not this is identical to the process of "formation of conscience" or to the "development of super-ego" is not essential for our purposes. It is important only to assert here that, since it is the sole governing agent of the individual's behavior at the beginning, external authority is considered to be at the basis and the origin of all internal controls.

One more note will complete the definition of terms used in this model. The restraining forces, while they inhibit action and, in relation to the opposing approach forces, are privative and, therefore, punishing, need not be considered as something necessarily negative. A restraining force may indeed be, and most often is, an approach force in its own right which happens to be at the moment incompatible with another approach tendency. Thus, the need to look attractive (an approach tendency in itself) may serve as a restraining force in relation to the approach tendency of hunger. This is important to recognize in order to account for the strength and persistence of certain internal restraining forces. Just as action (completion of approach behavior) is rewarding, so also counter-action (restraint behavior) is likewise rewarding in its own fashion and, therefore, tends to be repeated.

The opposition of the two forces -- the approach and the restraining -- places the individual in a situation of conflict. To the extent that there exists some equilibrium between the

two opposing forces, conflict is a state of inaction. The state of inaction is by no means static but rather dynamic; it is a state of tension since the opposition of the two forces cancels only their immediate effects but does not nullify the forces themselves. Now, obviously, individuals are not in a constant state of inaction and tension, nor can they be; consequently, some sort of resolution of most conflicts has to, and does, take place.

### MODES OF RESOLUTION OF CONFLICT

Our model of conflict allows for four possible kinds of resolution. First, the mature, realistic, "normal" resolution. This is most often one of compromise, of doing the realistic, the appropriate, the reasonable thing, doing that which in some measure satisfies both the approach and the restraining forces. Of essence for the realistic solution is the awareness on the part of the individual of both elements of conflict, i.e., of both the approach and the restraining forces, for only under conditions of awareness can compromises be sought and found. For example: a husband, living with in-laws, might wish to send his mother-in-law to some distant land, but he feels he ought not as he does not wish to incur the thunder of his wife. A compromise solution might be to arrange for the mother-in-law to go on frequent visits to other relatives. This, in part, would satisfy his longing for her absence (approach) and would allay his fear of his wife's wrath (restraint). He would be able to arrive at this ingenious compromise, however, only if he fully realized that he does indeed wish his mother-in-law's departure and that he does want to continue to enjoy his wife's approval.

The realistic solution, of course, need not necessarily be one of compromise. At times it may take the form of a decision in favor of full completion of the approach activity (e.g., a soldier going to battle in spite of his fear) or of full restraint from the activity (e.g., a vow of chastity). It is equally essential here that both elements of conflict be fully recognized and weighed, for only then is the person able to deal realistically with the consequences of the implemented decision.

The state of tension arising from the equilibrium of con-



flict can also be terminated or reduced by resolutions which are either partially or totally unrealistic. The individual experiences conflict only to the extent that he is aware of its component elements; consequently, he can remove himself from the experience of conflict by excluding from awareness one or both of the elements -- he can deny, suppress, repress the fact that he possesses the approach tendency in question, or that there exists a restraining force, or, finally, that both the approach and the restraining forces exist.

The unrealistic resolution by means of the denial of the approach element of the conflict may be termed, generally and rather loosely, the "neurotic" resolution. The denial is effected and maintained by the use of defense mechanisms of rationalization, projection, compensation, reaction formation, etc. Recalling our example, the husband might say: "I love my mother-in-law; I don't want to send her away." By means of such self-deception the conflict, for manifest purposes, is terminated. This form of resolution does allow the individual to rest with a decision (not to send mother-in-law away) and provides for the satisfaction of the recognized element of the conflict -- the restraining force (need to maintain wife's approval). The lack of realism here is in the fact that only the conscious representation of the approach tendency is eliminated, but not the approach tendency itself. The force itself continues to reside in the individual, but no longer intelligible and no longer subject to reasonable control and adjustment. What the person subsequently does with regard to the conflict, now unconscious, is apt to be abortive and stupid.<sup>4</sup> The individual may, on the other hand, in a somewhat similar way disregard and ignore the restraining element of the conflict and act out the approach tendency. The husband might say: "The thunder of a wife never killed anybody," and indeed he might ship his mother-in-law to a distant land. Again, for immediate purposes, the conflict is resolved in that the individual removes its immediate source. The lack of realism in this form of resolution lies in the fact that invariably and immediately the individual is confronted with new, and often more severe, conflicts to cope with.

Under conditions of extreme stress the individual might avail himself of still another unrealistic form of resolution,

one of denial of both elements of the conflict. In order for such sweeping denial to be maintained, not only the elements of conflict but all attending circumstances are usually grossly distorted, resulting in totally unreasonable behavior generally labelled as "psychotic." With reference to our example, the husband might say: "That is not my mother-in-law; that is Queen Elizabeth, and I am Philip." While again this kind of resolution does remove the individual from the experience of conflict, it obviously poses most serious problems for future general adjustment.

Which of the four modes of resolving conflict the individual will employ in a given situation will depend, first of all, on the prevailing conditions of conflict, i.e., the absolute and relative strengths of the elements composing conflict. If both the approach and the restraining forces are of such intensity as to make the situation extremely threatening and, therefore, intolerable to awareness, the "psychotic" resolution is probable. If, on the other hand, one of the elements is of relatively much greater intensity than the other, but both of sufficient strength to be uncomfortable to awareness, the denial of either the approach tendency or of the restraining force is likely. When both elements are of tolerable intensity and quality, the realistic solution, by definition, will be the one employed.

In addition to the prevailing conditions of conflict, the specific mode of resolution of a particular conflict is also determined by factors deriving from the previous experience of the individual. Since even the unrealistic solutions remove the person from the immediate impact of conflict, they are to that extent rewarding and, therefore, reinforced, and tend to be repeated when new similar situations of conflict arise. For this reason, it is possible to speak of habitual tendencies of individuals to use one particular mode of resolution of conflict in preference to others.

#### A DEFINITION OF DELINQUENCY AND SOME NOTES ON ETIOLOGY

Within the frame of reference of this model of conflict, a definition of delinquency can now be ventured. For the purposes of this exposition, a delinquent is defined as the individ-

ual whose habitual mode of resolving conflicts is that of acting out the approach tendencies with a disregard for the attending restraining forces.

While we have mentioned, very generally, factors determining the choice of a particular resolution of conflict by a given individual, we should turn now to a brief discussion of those factors which predispose an individual toward the habitual use of the delinquent resolution. The general answer is rather evident -- the delinquent mode is habitually adopted because the restraining forces in the case of the delinquent are typically weaker than the approach forces. Furthermore, since we are speaking of delinquency as a habitual mode of resolving conflict, it is the restraining forces internal to the individual which are in question. Somehow, in the delinquent there has not occurred an adequate translation of external controls into internal controls, making the latter typically weak. To put it differently, the process of internalization of controls in the case of the delinquent has been in some way faulty. Let us now briefly review the reasons for the faulty internalization process.

First, internalization of controls is apt to be not only faulty but impossible if there are no adequate external controls to begin with. Internal controls cannot properly develop, for example, if the parents, who for a number of years are the primary and the sole external authority, are simply absent from the developmental environment of the child. Thus, the orphan who happens to have no adequate parental substitutes, the illegitimate child, the child of the career mother who makes no adequate arrangements for his supervision, all are likely, other things being equal, to have weaker internal controls than children from normal parental environment. Statistics clearly show that an overwhelming majority of delinquents come from families in which there are some definite formal faults in the parental structure: early death of one of the parents, divorce, illegitimacy, etc.<sup>5</sup> Laxity of external controls may, of course, exist also in formally sound parental environments, particularly in the form of over-permissiveness and over-indulgence.<sup>6</sup> It is not difficult to see that an individual who, as a child, is given everything he wants, may continue to expect indiscriminate

gratification of his approach tendencies in later life, and may take steps to implement this expectation.

Equally damaging to the process of internalization of controls is unrelenting, excessive external restraint. Imposition of rules which are all but impossible to adhere to, demands which are impossible to meet, are ironically equivalent to no restraints at all. Parental rules which are such that they virtually cannot be not broken often invalidate, in the child's mind, the legitimacy and necessity of any rule.

A third reason for faulty internalization of controls requires a bit more elaboration. We have already pointed out that the development of internal controls has, at its origin and basis, controls which are applied to the individual from some external source. In order for proper internalization to take place, therefore, not only the limits themselves have to be reasonable and possible to accept, but the source of the limits has to be itself acceptable. Anything that detracts from the trustworthiness and acceptability of the external authority will damage the process of internalization.

Inconsistency of rules presented to the growing individual is one condition which casts doubt on the trustworthiness of the authority figure. If over-indulgence is not conducive to internalization of controls, and excessive rigidity is likewise damaging, then there is indeed nothing more deleterious than the combination of the two in the same family, the father perhaps ruling with an iron hand while the mother cuddles the child with an amorphous heart. In such a situation, the child is burdened with the impossible task of deciding which parent happens to be right, and he might well conclude that both are wrong and that no dictate of either parent is to be accepted without qualification. The same difficulty obtains when parental authority conflicts with authority to which the child is exposed outside of home -- school, church, or other significant adults. Inconsistency of authority may, for that matter, be evident even within a single source of external controls. The parent who frequently reverses himself, either because of his own changes in mood, or because he succumbs to manipulative attempts on the part of the child, is one such example. It is not surprising that such arbitrary execution of authority often results in resistance to the acceptance of any authority

and in profound confusion in the growing individual as to the stable norms of behavior.

The discrepancy between the rules extended to the child and the behavior example of the authority-figure itself detracts from the credibility and trustworthiness of authority even more significantly. The child is very sensitive to any form of insincerity and "hypocrisy," particularly when this affects the child himself. In order to learn to cope with the complexities of life, the child initially depends exclusively on the predictability, truthfulness, consistency of the parental environment. The criterion of what is right and what is wrong for a four-year-old, for example, is most often: "My father (or mother) said so." This unreserved trust of the parent, and, by generalization, of any adult, makes the results of any disillusionment with the authority-figure enduring and pronounced. Drastic results of such disillusionment will be evident in the example of a particular case below.

John B., 21, was brought to the attention of the psychologist at the time of his third commitment to a federal reformatory. A bright young man (I.Q. 131), he had channelled all his energies into criminal activity. He had visited every single state, travelling on stolen credit cards and subsisting on money stolen from people whom he would befriend en route. The psychiatric diagnosis was that of sociopathy, severe, with the attending recommendation that he should not be released from the institution until full expiration of his sentence.

The case history revealed that John was an exemplary child until the age of 12. His mother was described as extremely strict with him, often imposing unreasonable limits and making difficult demands. In spite of this, for all manifest appearances, John had accepted his mother's authority without question. He was one of the best students in school and in many ways a "model" child. His father had died in the war, so he had been told, and he felt proud of this, even to the extent that on one occasion he defended the "honor" of

his father in a fist fight with another boy who had accused John of being illegitimate. One day, quite accidentally, he happened upon his birth certificate. He took it to his mother and said: "This means I am a bastard." Within a week he left home and did not return, embarking on his extensive criminal career.

It is important to consider one more aspect of the quality of the source of external controls. Any restraint, by definition, involves some frustration of an approach tendency and is to that extent difficult to comply with. If the external restraint is only privative and therefore unrewarding, it will be resisted and will not be translated into internal control. In order for learning of controlled behavior to take place, some reward has to accompany it. To put it differently -- if the child is to adopt external rules of behavior as his own, he has to gain something by doing so. In the normal course of events, what he does gain is approval and acceptance by authority figures from whom the rules emanate. The importance of acceptance, approval, and understanding has been discussed in another paper of this workshop,<sup>7</sup> and need not be belabored here. The point that is specifically relevant here is simply that for proper internalization of controls to be possible, the external authority has to be not only consistent, reliable, trustworthy, but also rewarding, i.e., benevolent and supportive.

#### SPECIAL PROBLEMS OF COUNSELING THE ADOLESCENT

From what has been said about the selected etiological factors, it should be evident that the first preventive and corrective effort in this field should be directed not to the children in question but to the sources of external control. This, of course, is social work, and as such it is not within the province and the role of the psychological counselor. There are important reasons, however, why the counselor should be especially alert to environmental factors in individual cases of delinquency, even if it is not within his proper competence and function to intervene directly.

First of all, only with an adequate appraisal of the environmental influences can the counselor properly define the limits and the function of his role in a particular case. Perhaps it is theoretically true that the counseling process if properly conducted and insofar as it represents a relationship of the client to an authority figure, does something to counteract the negative environmental influences in every case. In practice, however, counseling efforts, in the face of adverse environmental conditions, are often futile. Indeed, counseling in a certain sense can even be harmful, if it is considered as the final answer, and if in its institution the corrective efforts rest while the often more difficult work with the delinquent's parents is postponed or unattempted. The quality of the source of external controls to which the growing individual is exposed is of prime importance and cannot be overemphasized; corrective work directed at the youth's environment should, therefore, always, whenever possible precede or accompany any attempt at counseling. The case below is provided as an illustration.

Robert A., 12 years old, was referred to a guidance clinic because of an incident at school. In the school yard one day he exposed himself to a group of girls. This brought to the attention of school authorities a number of less dramatic problems: inattention at classes, frequent absences, lying, etc. The complete social history was not available at the time of intake, but it was known that the child was adopted, and a thorough report of the investigation of the adoptive home was obtained from an affiliated agency which handled the adoption. On the surface, the adoptive home appeared entirely wholesome.

In the first few interviews with the psychologist, Robert was completely silent. When he did finally speak, his resentment and fear of authority was evident. He never spoke of his home, and when the subject was brought up, he would invariably become mute.

In the meantime, the mother of the child was

interviewed. It was learned quickly that she regarded Robert as a "curse." She was angry with the adoption agency for burdening her with a "defective," and admitted that she had thought many times of returning the child to the agency. She protested that she had done everything she knew to bring up Robert "right and proper." A sample of her rearing practices: when passing the city courthouse, Robert would be required to take off his hat and give thanks for his name (being adopted); he would have to give two or three days "notice" before his individual toothpaste-tube was depleted or else be forced to brush his teeth with soap. Some such "principle" also applied to obtaining fresh underwear, etc.

In spite of continued intensive counseling, Robert made no tangible progress. It was evident that some major readjustment in his home environment was urgently needed.

In addition to the need for an adequate appraisal of the limits, the function, and the usefulness of counseling in individual cases, it is important for the counselor to be aware of pertinent environmental factors for still another reason. It is axiomatic that counseling is most effective if it is instituted at the earliest possible time in the course of the youth's development. Particularly for the part-time counselor (teacher-counselor, priest-counselor), who does not depend exclusively on outside referrals but is often called upon to determine himself where his services are most needed, this often presents a problem of diagnosis. The early signs of a tendency towards the delinquent solution of conflicts are often not easy to detect, for the reason that young children normally are under direct external control and therefore the signs of preference for the "acting-out" solution of conflict are often covert. It is often difficult to predict, from only the knowledge of the child himself, the habitual modes of behavior which would become manifest once the external controls are relaxed. In the controlled environment of the classroom, for example, even a strong tendency toward rebelliousness may be suppressed, particularly in the first grades of school.



It is important, therefore, that anyone engaged in corrective or preventive work in the field of delinquency learn as much as possible about the child himself and about the authority, especially parental, to which he is exposed.

The reliable signs of the delinquent mode of behavior first appear in recognizable forms precisely at the age of adolescence. At this age there occurs a rapid decrease of external controls in the form of emancipation from the home. And it is at this age that internal controls, adequate or inadequate, are put to test. And in this context, we can indeed consider adolescence as a period of "testing of limits," of checking the validity of external authority which has closely regulated the adolescent's life up to this time. The testing of limits takes place because at this age, as suggested in the previous paper,<sup>8</sup> the adolescent finds himself possessing a variety of powers with all the energy of their initial strength. Many of the approach tendencies are at their peak forcefulness in adolescence.

For this reason, the period of adolescence is indeed a crucial juncture in the development of the habitual modes of responding to conflict. While the predisposition to delinquent modes of resolving conflict is largely apparent at an earlier age, it is at adolescence that these modes are cemented because of the strength of rewards which the gratification of tendencies at this age offers. If something is to be done about the faulty state of internal controls, therefore, the period of adolescence is the last opportunity, and, because of frequent difficulties of early diagnosis and early intervention, it is also most often the first opportunity. As mentioned before, the detection of the signs of the delinquent mode of resolving conflicts is usually no longer difficult at this age; many signs are quite overt and unmistakable, i.e., delinquent behavior. Even the more subtle signs are clear if it is remembered that faulty internalization of controls presupposes some fault in the relationship of the adolescent to authority figures. The role of the teacher, the priest, the "full-time" counselor is by definition that of an authority figure; consequently, the most reliable and the most immediately available reading of delinquent trends in the adolescent is the appraisal

of his relationship to the counselor. Certain behaviors and attitudes toward the counselor (e.g., unprovoked hostile attitude, avoidance, questioning of the validity of the counselor's position), if manifested frequently and consistently, point to a state of alienation from authority which in turn signals a possible faulty internalization of controls.

Once it is realized that the adolescent does have difficulty in relating to authority figures, and, by deduction, is, therefore, inclined toward adoption of the delinquent mode of resolving conflicts, the goals of corrective treatment are rather evident; insofar as the counselor is an authority figure, he has to be first of all a good authority, with a view to promoting some betterment of the relationship of the adolescent to authority in general. The need for the counselor to be a good and benevolent authority is, of course, not specific to the counseling of delinquents. Indeed, in our opinion, there are no specific principles which apply to the process of counseling the delinquent and do not apply to counseling of other kinds of clients. Whatever constitutes proper counseling in general applies equally well to the counseling of the delinquent. The general principles have been the main subject matter of discussions in the seminars and practicums, and there is no need to reiterate them here.

With the delinquent client, however, there exists a peculiar difficulty of counseling relationship which is not ordinarily met in the counseling of other kinds of clients. The very nature of delinquency, as we have seen, implies resistance, resentment and alienation from all authority, naturally including the counselor. The establishment of the initial rapport with the problem adolescent is therefore most difficult; yet it is the most crucial factor in counseling success. Some even maintain that established delinquency cannot be corrected by psychotherapeutic means, because the positive relationship between the counselor and the client, which is of essence to the counseling process, cannot be attained. This pessimistic view, of course, does not apply to those problem adolescents who are not yet confirmed in their delinquent behavior, but it does underscore the importance of recognizing, and being prepared for, the initial difficulty of the therapeutic relationship which invariably accompanies any counseling attempt with this type

of client.

It is further important to realize that the difficulty of establishing a proper counseling relationship is due not only to the resistance of the delinquent client himself, but also to the special problems which the very symptomatology of delinquency creates for the counselor's self-perception as well. In the face of the anti-social behavior of the client, it is often difficult for the counselor to prescind from his own system of social values and to view the client with "unconditional positive regard." It is easier for the counselor to be tolerant and accepting of the neurotic client who behaves stupidly than of the delinquent who behaves offensively and even criminally. The counselor needs to be keenly aware of this, so that he can make the special conscious effort which is frequently necessary in order to surmount this difficulty. Counseling can be successful only if the counselor is able to commit himself unconditionally to the interests of the client. If, in relation to the problem adolescent, the counselor defines himself as a representative of society, a champion of law and order, a crusader for the betterment of the community, the therapeutic relationship is not possible. If the counselor's primary motivation, in working with delinquents, is to create a better world with fewer illegitimate babies born, fewer purses snatched, fewer windows broken, his work with the delinquent is likely to be fruitless. It is recognized, of course, that the necessary unconditional commitment to the interests of the client will not always be possible, for the counselor has responsibilities to society as well as to his client. In instances where social considerations prevail, however, the counselor should frankly admit that there and then he ceases to function in his proper role.

The establishment of proper rapport is, therefore, while difficult, of utmost importance in the counseling of the delinquent. If and when a positive working relationship is accomplished, the reversal of attitude of the problem adolescent toward authority is already in progress and what occurs subsequently in counseling can then often proceed with relative ease.

## SUMMARY

There are many important aspects to the problem of delinquency that have not even been touched upon in this paper. The purpose of this presentation has been to offer an approach to the understanding of delinquency in the form of a general model of psychological conflict. Delinquency was defined as that habitual mode of resolving conflicts which manifests itself by indiscriminate gratification of approach tendencies as they arise. This habitual mode of behavior was attributed to the weakness of inner restraints which in turn derives from some fault in the process of internalization of controls. It was submitted that at the origin and at the basis of internal controls is external authority. Consequently, primary efforts in the prevention of delinquency should be directed at the insufficiency and inadequacy of the sources of external controls. With reference to counseling proper, the special difficulty of attaining initial rapport was discussed and emphasized.

## FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>J. Dollard and N. E. Miller, Personality and Psychotherapy (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1950).

<sup>2</sup>K. Lewin, A Dynamic Theory of Personality (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1935).

<sup>3</sup>K. Lewin, Principles of Topological Psychology (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1936).

<sup>4</sup>J. Dollard, op. cit.

<sup>5</sup>S. Glueck and Eleanor T. Glueck, One Thousand Juvenile Delinquents (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1934).

<sup>6</sup>D. M. Levy, Maternal Overprotection (New York: Columbia University Press, 1943).

<sup>7</sup>R. J. Steimel, "Understanding the Adolescent," in R. J. Steimel, Psychological Counseling of the Adolescent. (Washington, D. C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1962).

<sup>8</sup>J. W. Stafford, "Adolescence, The Prelude to Maturity," in R. J. Steimel, Psychological Counseling of the Adolescent (Washington, D. C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1962).

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## COUNSELING ADOLESCENTS THROUGH EFFECTIVE TEACHING

by

Sister Marian Dolores Robinson, S.N.J.M.

The existentialists, despite their philosophical meanderings, have contributed at least one invaluable impetus to modern thought. They have shifted the attention of philosophers, psychologists, and social scientists from an exaggerated concentration on positivistic trends and interminable statistical interpretations of the human person to a consideration of the reality of subjective experience and its powerful influence on man's behavior. In all of the encounters which teachers experience with students and students with teachers, in and out of a classroom situation, a realistic understanding of the joys, anguish, otherness, togetherness, and other varieties of interpersonal communications, is usually more important to the successful learning situation than a folder of records or sheaves of statistics.

Let it be understood from the outset that we must recognize the need of statistical and scientific information and objective data provided by tests, rating scales, records, and other sources for evaluation purposes. But for the ultimate understanding of each individual student's potential and his actual achievement, it is necessary for the teacher to have insight into his motivational patterns and a grasp of his dynamic orientation. These areas, for the most part, escape the rigors of science and measurement. They are the intangibles which we meet in every human person, the immeasurable realities which wield such a potent influence in the final attainments of students in any academic setting. As Jung<sup>1</sup> says:

If I want to understand an individual human being  
I must lay aside all scientific knowledge of the

average man and discard all theories in order to adopt a completely new and unprejudiced attitude. I can only approach the task of understanding with a free and open mind, whereas knowledge of man, an insight into human character, presupposes all sorts of knowledge about mankind in general.

The primary goal of an academic institution as well as the teachers who staff it is the intellectual development of the students who are enrolled. Included in the pursuit of this primary goal must be the indispensable means of attaining such an end, and among the latter we are concerned with the fulfillment of psychological needs which either foster or impede the intellectual growth of these students. Too many of our academicians as well as our institutes of learning have been influenced by the Platonic version of the ideal student who is primarily a disembodied intellect seeking for an abstract form of truth, or by the Cartesian parallelist who divides mind from feeling and ignores the one or the other. Learning is living and certainly not a disassociated way of life. Learning is growing in knowledge, and academic learning, just like any other form of growth, is immersed in social relationships, internalized feelings, and dynamic modes of intercommunication.

With these few introductory thoughts to set the stage let us consider the adolescent, his classroom milieu, and the teachers from whom he receives direction along the path of learning.

If the academic and psychological climate of the classroom is adequate, a good deal of group counseling can be accomplished through these same channels. Before discussing this approach we must make several clarifications:

- (1) In cases of acute emotional stress the adolescent should always be referred to a professional therapist; but even in these instances of personality disturbance, the kind of group counseling indicated in this discussion will still be helpful.
- (2) The kind of counseling which a teacher may do through teaching need not interfere with his primary academic goals. On the other hand, there is great

assurance that classroom teaching which simultaneously promotes intellectual growth and emotional satisfaction is superior to other types of teaching which may be purely instructional, teacher-centered, or disciplinary and directive in its procedure.

- (3) Effective teaching includes techniques which are related to the dominant needs characteristic of the age-level concerned; and these dominant needs vary from one age group to the other. Even young adolescents differ from older adolescents in the personal traits which strongly influence their motivational patterns. Gesell's<sup>2</sup> researches have contributed many new insights to our knowledge of the adolescent personality:

The range of individual differences is as wide as humanity itself. In infancy many of these differences are subtle and elusive, but even then they are impressive in their scope. By the time of adolescence the differences which have become apparent stagger description. The vastness of the problem of individual differences, however, need not dismay or deter us unduly. We may at least observe the manner in which the adolescent discloses and develops his individuality as he moves from one stage of maturity to another, for we can approach the study of individuality from the standpoint of developmental characteristics.

The ever-increasing demands on teachers for counseling services, the unfeasibility of providing frequent individual student conferences, the natural preferences which adolescents have for group techniques, are all factors which foster a theory of counseling adolescents through effective teaching.

It goes without saying that the more psychological knowledge and subject-matter enrichment a teacher has the more able he will be to motivate his students toward academic achievement and psychological maturity. And this is one



time when we can say that a "little learning is not a dangerous thing." Whatever courses or helps the teacher can obtain in counseling, mental hygiene, communications, and other basic courses in human dynamics will be invaluable to him in classroom procedures. If these courses do nothing more than open up new horizons of thought, provide new insights into human relationships, or give teachers a realization that the process of learning is not a feeling-less activity on the part of students, much will be accomplished. Sometimes a few courses can change and improve a teacher's whole perceptual outlook on the classroom situation, and this in itself is a major achievement toward progress in education. So often a teacher regards his function as an activity of grafting new knowledge on a student, and does not seem to realize that the adolescent learner becomes receptive to new ideas only when they are presented to him through his own perceptual field which is very remote from that of his teacher. The first requisite for any kind of communication from one person to another is a clear-cut understanding of the other person's perceptual field, his idea of values, goals, and needs, and his world in general. Ruth Strang<sup>3</sup> points out that:

Psychologists have increasingly emphasized the importance of studying the way an individual perceives a situation. Many recent trends, such as that toward concern with the self-concept and "self-consistency," focus on this emphasis. The way the person perceives himself in relation to the situation largely determines how he behaves and what he learns.

To enter into the adolescent realm it is necessary to experience their perceptual world, to see things as they see them. Only then is it possible to promote effective learning. In this very same manner we are able to understand adolescent needs, desires, hopes, and confusions. This is the first step in counseling -- to understand, to meet the student in his own way of thinking and estimating, to appreciate his aspirations and ideals though they may be very different from our own, and to incorporate all of these in our classroom presentations.

This is also the first step in effective teaching. As Mouly<sup>4</sup> says:

Qualified or not, the teacher must make understanding of children and their behavior one of his primary responsibilities -- for understanding children is an integral aspect of teaching them, not something one undertakes when things get out of hand. And whereas love is not enough, it is essential, and, when coupled with sensitivity and a good grasp of the basic principle of psychology, it will go a long way.

Most if not all behavior and personality problems stem from conflicts in human relationships. The adolescent's personal relationships in the classroom and in other group situations will often reflect his inner unity or disunity. His learning power is enhanced or impeded accordingly. Although the most serious problems of adolescents arise from unfavorable home situations, we must realize that they spend a good percentage of their time in the school environment. Even if an adolescent comes to the classroom with difficulties arising from other sources, the five or more hours which he spends in the classroom are going to deeply influence the turn which these difficulties will take. The adolescent who perceives the school environment as a place where he experiences achievement in learning and social satisfaction by wholesome contacts with his classmates and teachers will be highly motivated toward intellectual goals and will be receptive to group participation which leads to maturity. Pressey's<sup>5</sup> research shows that:

The extent to which a child wants to be in school at all depends to a large extent on the school's ability to satisfy his emotional needs. Satisfaction of these needs in school leads to greater motivation and greater personal involvement in school tasks, and correspondingly greater learning.

The two things we need to consider at this point are the

dominant social characteristics of adolescents and the kind of academic program which provides opportunities for intellectual achievement enhanced by social growth. Some of the dominant characteristics of younger adolescents which are basic to the social needs of this age-level include a strong sense of group consciousness, a yen for argumentation, a keen desire to manifest cooperation and a powerful attraction to share secrets with others in peer groups. All of these facets of the adolescent nature are based on interpersonal relations. When emphasis is made on learning as a group function in the classroom, it is obvious that the adolescent's opportunities for intellectual growth can be best fulfilled through procedures which simultaneously provide him with deep social satisfaction. The cause of some adolescents' intense dislike for school often arises from the school's failure to offer ways and means of personal development together with motivation toward intellectual growth. For most adolescents school life which is bereft of socialized recitations and cooperative projects is poignantly distasteful and soon becomes a life of unbearable boredom, even though these same adolescents might be intellectually gifted and like to study. It is incredible that so many educators overlook this obvious cause of adolescent disinterest in academic endeavors. School set-ups which still rigidly adhere to a seating plan of desk rows fastened to the floor by runners, day-by-day question and answer presentation, routine raise-a-hand and stand-up-to-respond procedure, are the very ones which fail to eliminate these obvious impediments to student growth. If adolescents continue to learn it is in spite of, rather than because of, these conditions. It is this kind of classroom climate which of course impedes a counseling communication between teacher and student. Figuratively speaking, the teacher is on one side of the desk and the student is on the other, and between them hangs an impenetrable psychological curtain of separation. The interpersonal psychological atmosphere necessary for the most effective type of communication is absent; and this is true for intellectual communication as well as for personal influence and counseling opportunities.

Basic to a theory of counseling through effective teaching is the assumption that the personal progress of students as

well as the learning they acquire is influenced by their socio-emotional needs. Teacher-student relationships can facilitate or block learning and teachers can utilize group participation in order to change student behavior and attitudes. This is the core idea of counseling through teaching. Desirable or undesirable behavior arises from attitudes which in turn are formed and developed through the fulfillments or deprivations which adolescents experience in their interactions with teachers and other students. Many traditional teachers completely overlook these significant facts and sometimes seem unable to perceive these intangible but dynamically real and potent influences on behavior and learning. Some teachers of this type consider new socialized techniques as "fads" and seem quite blinded to the superiority of these approaches as motivational sources. Traditional teachers overlook the emotional satisfaction which cooperative learning gives to adolescent students. Such teachers are impeded by a faulty notion of classroom discipline which they conceive to be a teacher-controlled classroom. In their estimation an instructor's primary role is to implant textbook facts forcefully into the minds of his students, as if student receptivity had very little to do with the whole transaction. Learning is a far more complex process, especially the kind of adolescent group learning which occurs in the typical classroom. A teacher-centered program of learning and discipline may accomplish certain achievements such as completion of required subject-matter tasks and apparent conformity to external modes of behavior. But experience and research indicate that independent scholarship and creativity in learning is fostered by permissiveness in the teacher and a student's ego-involvement in group learning. For the same reasons, desirable behavior in adolescents becomes more permanent when it has been developed through teacher attitudes and classroom techniques which develop self-control on the part of students rather than a pattern of conformity which dissolves as supervision is withdrawn. For the adolescent, intellectual development is so closely coupled with social growth through his school environment that we can hardly separate these two aspects. In this sense teaching and counseling adolescents in a classroom setting can be combined and fulfill a two-fold purpose. Adolescents who simultaneously experience intellectual

enjoyment and emotional satisfaction in school life will inevitably be happy adolescents and interested students. Even in cases where adolescents are suffering from a disturbed home life, enriched school experiences do much to compensate for this lack of family security which so many of them encounter.

Ineffective teaching can be a source of great frustration for adolescents. Teenagers are keenly aware of deficits in a teacher's communicative abilities and often find such a teacher repugnant because he symbolizes boredom in their eyes. Often, too, the ineffectual teacher receives much hostility and antagonism from his students and defensively resorts to sarcasm or other protective devices. In doing so, he forfeits his power to influence students personally and his chance to motivate them intellectually. Effective teachers and counselors must be strongly aware of their own negative reactions and shortcomings and should try to realize how these deficits affect their students. Carl Rogers<sup>6</sup> suggests one way of getting a good picture of oneself as a teacher:

To better understand the personal and individual reactions of my students, I frequently set up the policy of asking for individual weekly reaction sheets, as I call them, on which the student can freely express his feelings relevant to the course. He may talk about the work he is doing; he may express opinions in regard to the class or the instructor; and he is given my assurance that what he says on these sheets will have no relationship whatsoever to the grade he receives in the course. The use of this simple device is one of the most meaningful things I have ever done in my teaching.

In any teacher-student activity, a strong intermingling of intellectual exchange and emotional interaction occurs. The outcome of this dynamic interchange can be harmful to students when the teacher lacks ability or is unsympathetic to teenage needs. On the other hand, there is no greater influence on an adolescent's intellectual motivation and on his progress toward maturity than a talented sympathetic teacher. A realistic

teacher promotes a love of learning in his students and at the same time helps them to develop wholesome personalities. Karl Stern<sup>7</sup> recalls his experiences of teacher influence in The Pillar of Fire:

I have said that everything personal, spontaneous and improvised in our schooling stuck much better in my memory than those things which correspond to the official curriculum. It was always like this, even later at high school and at the university. . . I found later those teachers influenced us most who showed a good deal of improvisation outside of, or instead of, the curriculum; these were teachers who gave one something personal by means of a personal approach.

Effective teaching fosters learning that is personally satisfying to the student in two ways. It opens the gate to knowledge and the possession of truths which the human intellect of its nature pursues relentlessly. Secondly, it enables the student to participate and share new knowledge with his colleagues. Considering the dominant characteristics of the adolescent, namely, his group consciousness, his potential for argumentation, his need to show cooperation, and his love for exchanging new ideas with his companions, there is no more adequate channel for all these dynamic drives than the kind of social learning which can take place in a student-orientated classroom.

The teacher's skill is tested not so much by his ability to instruct factually as it is by his ability to assist his students in gaining new insights. There is no greater thrill for any student than the one he experiences when he intellectually sees a new relationship or discovers for himself a new reality in any subject-matter he studies. Learning is thrilling when it is meaningful and filled with new revelations. This kind of learning becomes a labor of love rather than a repugnant, loathsome, necessary task. Anyone of us has had the experience of reading a new book which is mostly dross and perhaps does not even provide a single new idea. We consider this type of book a poor investment and a waste of time. Similarly,

the adolescent who is subjected to fifty minutes of lecturing in which he neither participates with social satisfaction nor receives new knowledge for intellectual stimulation leaves with feelings of disillusionment and disappointment. When this type of experience becomes a daily event, recurring in several or all of his classes, it is easy to imagine the process of intellectual deprivation and social starvation which gradually comes to color the whole picture of an adolescent's school life. Add hostility or lack of understanding on the part of his teachers to this situation and you get a very unwholesome atmosphere which can breed only rebellion, indifference, truancy, and a distaste for learning.

The first requisite of good teaching is a plan of preparation which designs each day's presentation with a build-up that leads to some new insights for the students. Presentations which offer the students opportunities to draw new relationships give them such emotional satisfaction as well as intellectual challenge that they leave the class with an eagerness to return. New knowledge is a form of possession and is just as vitally exquisite for any human being as the kind of possession which is enjoyed in the order of affection. There is a strong parallel in these two different modes of human satisfaction and their kinship must be thoroughly understood if a teacher will be a successful educator and a helpful counselor. New knowledge is an acquisition which becomes a permanent part of the learner. Observation of a student's sheer delight in obtaining the correct answer to a difficult mathematics problem or of his success in gleaning new ideas from a literary selection is proof enough of the joy he can experience in these endeavors. A teacher who is himself aware of all the sources of discovery for his students will be able to introduce innumerable worthwhile enterprises.

In group learning situations such as we find in the ideal classroom, students identify with one another in the joys they experience in learning. Through identification they influence each other in the emphasis of common motivations and form a bond of camaraderie which we refer to as ego-involvement. When a student's identification in a group is based on intellectual achievement and his social satisfaction is derived from associations made in a learning situation, then he has acquired

the most desirable kind of motivation. If the basis for ego-involvement in a classroom group happens to be derived from agreed hostility against the teacher or from companionship and mutual comfort arising from poor academic performance, then we have a type of identification which leads to disintegration of intellectual motives. A teacher should recognize the significant value of providing learning activities in which his students see opportunities to fulfill their own social needs and develop interpersonal relationships. By dividing a large class into committee groups or other types of cooperative organizations, the students become more closely associated and are more able to gain approval and status. Interchanging these groups from time to time draws the whole class together in a bond of cooperative performances.

Most teachers know that group discussions are advised by newer books on techniques but often do not know why they are considered more effective. It is important that teachers realize the psychological value of these approaches instead of accepting them just because they are proposed by others, or because they are new.

In order to relate the curriculum to the individual needs of the students, it is necessary to know as much as possible about each student's background. One criterion of good teachers and counselors is their interest in knowing students personally in order to understand the best ways of applying and relating their specific needs to the courses they are taking. The whole attitude and approach of teachers and counselors must be positive. Their primary aim must be to demonstrate the values in improvement of learning skills and in accruing knowledge. Students should be shown all that is in it for them. Many ineffective teachers spend half their time pointing out errors to their students and in making corrections and spend very little time in showing them models that are suitable to their grade or achievement level. Teachers and counselors should strive to give students ideas, suggestions, materials, models which they can see as positive, concrete, and desirable means of attaining their academic goals.

Neither teachers nor counselors should be looked upon as disciplinarians. Granted that teachers sometimes are obliged to exert efforts to control a situation, this is never the



duty of a counselor when he is acting as counselor. However, the teacher should not be looked upon by his students as a whip-cracker or some kind of a rigid task-master. This is not the primary function of a teacher. And yet, in many cases, students consider teachers to be inhibitors, dispensers of punishment, tyrants, or authoritarian figures to be avoided. Student attitudes of this caliber do not foster learning. Rather, students should regard their teachers as invaluable sources of help, as intelligent guides to learning, and as ideals of friendliness and kindness. The whole approach to successful teaching and counseling is positive; modes of giving, sharing, helping, assisting are types of the positive approach. Likewise academic presentations should be devoid of the negative; over-emphasis on corrections, errors, punishments, deprivations, or any kind of belittling, should be eliminated.

Many extracurricular activities serve as supplementary aids to group learning in regular classes and also offer enrichment for gifted students. Panel discussions given for the class or the entire student body, dramatic productions, glee clubs, language honor societies, model assemblies are areas which appeal to an adolescent's most vital desires for group performance and for venting himself argumentatively. Students with intense expressive tendencies should be encouraged to join extracurricular activities which correspond to their specific psychological needs.

On the high school level, particularly, but even on the college level it is true that the best teachers are also the ones who most often are chosen by the students as counselors. Adolescents are attracted to good teachers because they have already established basic bonds of personal interchange with them and these bonds are, in turn, the same basic requisites for a good counseling relationship. The experience of joy in learning, of acceptance, of group participation, and of giving and receiving, which the adolescent enjoys in the class of an expert teacher deepens his awareness of achievement, and he becomes conscious of feelings of confidence in the person of the teacher. Effective teaching and counseling, despite their diverse primary goals, require the same psychological climate for success and can be coordinated in such a way that both goals can be attained by a classroom teacher who has a

proper knowledge of the counseling process. This kind of counseling cannot of course replace the more direct approach of vocational guidance or the deeper type of therapeutic counseling which only can be accomplished by individual conferences, or by group therapy which is clinically designed. Counseling through effective teaching, however, will make the normal adolescent stronger in his self-directive controls and will make him more able to endure the vicissitudes he meets daily. This type of counseling will channel his intense feelings into productive efforts and will do much to compensate for emotional upsets he may experience in other situations.

Many qualities of a good teacher are similar to those of a good counselor. As Rollo May<sup>8</sup> says:

The counseling approach is of great value in the classroom. In fact the whole teaching procedure, it can be asserted, is most effective when approached with an understanding of personality and its empathetic functions. Significant teaching requires empathy, for only thus does the professor's mind meet the student's in a fructifying intellectual experience... Knowledge may go from mind to mind through relatively impersonal means; but we should all admit that the more significant kind of knowledge is that in which there is a mutual participation, a partial identification of the minds of teacher and student.

For this reason it is possible that a certain amount of counseling can take place in a student-orientated classroom. Only a skilled teacher, however, is capable of responding to a student's personal needs through scholastic channels. In order to perceive the innumerable, subtle manifestations of personality characteristics which students reveal in their discussions, in their display of interests, and in their ways of handling recitations, a teacher must know his own subject matter well and also have a knack for communication. Once he is master in these areas there are many avenues through which he can influence the attitudes and behavior of his stu-

dents. Literature, the social sciences, and religion offer the most opportunities for group counseling. In literature, for example, students quickly identify with literary figures who symbolize their own needs. They project many of their own feelings and anxieties in their interpretations of poems and plays and if they are permitted to act out parts of these selections they experience therapeutic effects. Small group discussions encourage a freer expression among students. The teacher can respond to students in these projections and identifications by openly recognizing the feelings which are expressed in this way, and perhaps discussing with the students what they think might have accounted for the difficulty and how it could have been avoided. At other times, if the story content is favorable and the main character demonstrates courage or other kinds of heroism, students will often be deeply stirred by such ideals, especially if these things are discussed and dramatized, with the teacher guiding in the background. Meaningfulness is deepened by these modes of expression. Oftentimes students who suffer from deprivation of affection will become ego-involved in stories which center around unfortunate characters. They show deep feelings of sympathy and compassion in their comments and if the teacher tactfully reinforces their statements in a strong positive manner he is very often able to communicate feelings of understanding which comfort the students concerned and give them feelings of personal confidence in him. If a student experiences this kind of response consistently he will often seek out the teacher in order to talk about his own affairs. A step taken in this direction by the student is the initial requisite for a good personal counseling session, namely, that the student has confidence in his counselor and initiates the idea of talking things over. Such a student may be inspired to seek higher academic goals, or he may want to talk over avocational possibilities, or he simply may experience a friendly interchange with a person whom he admires. In any case his attitudes are open to influence and it is precisely at this point that the teacher is most effective, and most able to motivate the student toward intellectual development, and also to lead him further along the path of maturity. During interviews of this type the teacher will realize whether or not the student is in need of

further specialized counseling and is in an advantageous situation to suggest it, if necessary, since the student initiated the visit. If the student, on the other hand, is seeking further intellectual enlightenment in a personal conference it is indicative that his academic interests are high and the teacher will be able to motivate him to further creativity and to greater intellectual achievements. In either case the student is profiting personally from effective teaching and the teacher is exercising his greatest potential, namely, his personal influence on student attitudes, motivation, and behavior. Describing the art of counseling Rollo May<sup>9</sup> has said:

Influence is one of the results of empathy. Wherever there is empathy some influence will be occurring... There is first the influence of ideas... I addressed a young people's group to which I was acting as adviser, on a certain subject. This same subject came up again for discussion somewhat by accident six months later. The young people presented back ideas almost identical with those I had suggested months earlier; they had forgotten in the meantime the origin of the ideas and defended them vehemently as their very own brain children.

In conclusion, we may say that a good deal of group counseling can be accomplished by an effective teacher who is also sensitive to the needs of his students and who is equipped with adequate personal qualities and a sufficient basic knowledge of ways and means of responding to students through these academic channels of communication.

#### FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>C. G. Jung, The Undiscovered Self (New York: Mentor Books, 1959), p. 18.

<sup>2</sup>Arnold Gesell, et al., Youth (New York: Harper and Brothers, Publishers, 1956), p. 25.

<sup>3</sup>Ruth Strang, The Adolescent Views Himself (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., Inc., 1957), p. 3.

<sup>4</sup>George J. Mouly, Psychology for Effective Teaching (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1960), p. 442.

<sup>5</sup>Sidney L. Pressey, et al., Psychology in Education (New York: Harper and Brothers, Publishers, 1959), p. 324.

<sup>6</sup>Carl Rogers, "Lessons I Have Learned in Counseling with Individuals," Proceedings of the Minnesota Counselors Association, Midwinter Conference, 1958 (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 1959), p. 18.

<sup>7</sup>Karl Stern, The Pillar of Fire (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1951), p. 21.

<sup>8</sup>Rollo May, The Art of Counseling (New York: Abingdon Press, 1939), p. 123.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 92.

## SPIRITUAL DIRECTION OF THE ADOLESCENT

by

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The purpose of a workshop such as this, I am sure we would all agree, is a pragmatic, a practical one. Presumably, you have come here looking for practical hints to further your important work in the guidance of youth; hints that will be of use to you in aiding the intellectual, physical, social, emotional, moral, and religious development and adjustment of the teenagers who come under your care.

One thing definitely should have been impressed on us all by now: that sound practice in this field of adolescent guidance must be based upon empirical evidence, not mere arm-chair, wishful thinking. If we truly wish to meet and solve the legitimate needs of the teenager, we must first know what those needs actually are, and give up the attempt to meet the needs we merely think they have. As nearly as we can, we must try to view the world as the adolescent sees it, through his or her eyes; and we must beware of pontificating on the problems of youth from the vantage point of adulthood.

These same strictures hold true also for the moral, religious and spiritual problems of adolescence. If the suggestions to be made in the course of this paper are to be of truly practical worth, they must be based upon the existing empirical data concerning the moral and religious development of the adolescent and the problems he truly encounters in this all-important area of personality growth. Fortunately, there is a growing body of such data which can already be of assistance to us in determining practical remedies for problems known to exist. More evidence is desperately needed, however, since this is a relatively untouched field of research, as is the whole area of religious psychology. We shall, then, first review the available data, and whatever suggestions are to be made will be based upon these data.

## EMPIRICAL DATA

The existing empirical data on the moral and religious development and experiences of adolescents I have attempted to summarize in the following twelve propositions:

- (1) The Church is still an important and influential institution in the lives of American youth. Ausubel sums up the information which leads to such a conclusion:

A majority of American adolescents belong to a church, usually the same church as their parents, attend church services once a month or more, have a favorable attitude toward the church, rely upon prayer, and believe in a personal, omnipotent, omniscient God who, although bodyless, participated in the writing of the Bible and guides the affairs of men and nations. This evidence by no means indicates homogeneity in the religious beliefs or practices of adolescents. As a matter of fact, significant differences exist between the sexes, among age groups, among religious denominations, between high and low income groups, and between urban and rural adolescents. It does indicate, however, that organized religion as a moral, philosophical, and social institution has not lost its grip on American youth.<sup>1</sup>

- (2) There is a trend, however, towards a general decrease in church attendance as adolescence progresses. This is less true for girls than boys, and less true for Catholics, than either Protestants or Jews.<sup>2</sup> Where this phenomenon does occur, however, it seems due less to a disinterest in religion than to the fact that the needs of the adolescent are not being met by existing church programs.
- (3) Adolescence is not a period of religious or moral

upheaval.<sup>3</sup> "Storm and stress" does not seem characteristic of this phase of adolescent experience. The moral and religious training previously acquired is generally retained, though the basis for doing so shifts from loyalty to parents and the prestige enjoyed by authority to peer group influence and more mature rational considerations. Not even college attendance, contrary perhaps to popular opinion, seems to affect religious belief very drastically, though the latest study by Dudycha in 1933 seems to indicate that scientific interest among college students may be negatively related to religious belief.<sup>4</sup> Whether this persists in post-college years has not been empirically determined.

- (4) Adolescents are no longer satisfied with arbitrary appeals to authority on questions of moral or religious doctrine and practice. They are increasingly interested in the meaning of religion for their lives as adolescence progresses, and they tend to be more tolerant, and less literal in their interpretation of religious doctrine.<sup>5</sup>
- (5) Religious affiliation seems to be the most important single variable in the religious development of an adolescent. Eighty-one per cent of all adolescents choose the denomination of their parents; and where there is conflict among the parents, a majority of adolescents follow the religious affiliation of the mother.<sup>6</sup>
- (6) The intellectual maturation characteristic of the adolescent period parallels and seems to determine the maturation of religious concepts. Adolescents are more capable than children of abstract concepts concerning God and the moral order, and this trend towards abstractness definitely appears.<sup>7</sup> Religious "awakening" is not a function of pubescence, as was formerly thought. It seems to be rather a gradual process, again paralleling intellectual development. Children who are precocious in their intellectual development often show this "awakening" to religious realities before the period of adolescence.<sup>8</sup>



- (7) A definite gap exists between knowledge of moral and religious precepts and their practice; i.e., there is very little correlation between mere knowledge of such precepts and moral or religious conduct. There is considerable evidence for this important finding.<sup>9</sup> Kuhlen, for example, reports data showing,

a high similarity in moral knowledge between teachers and inmates of a reform school for women. And delinquents readily admitted that they knew their behavior was wrong. Obviously, the lack of a one-to-one relationship between moral conduct and moral knowledge does not mean the latter is unimportant. If a person does not know what is acceptable, there is little more than chance likelihood that he will behave as society expects. Correct moral knowledge thus is a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for moral behavior.<sup>10</sup>

The point here is that moral and religious knowledge must be incorporated into dynamic, motivating ideals if it is to affect the teenager's behavior.

- (8) Such ideals are formed by reference to concrete models, especially in early adolescence. Parents recede; more remote figures increase in importance in this respect. Public and historical figures exert most influence here, even in Catholic schools. Older adolescents rely more on composite, imaginary models than on single ones.<sup>11</sup> As would be expected, religious figures (e.g. Christ and the saints) exert more influence on Catholic children in Catholic schools than on those who attend the public schools.<sup>12</sup> Girls, oddly enough, choose masculine figures more often than feminine ones in the construction of these ideal models.
- (9) An exaggerated moral perfectionism is characteristic of many adolescents; i.e., they tend to view moral and religious principles in black and white terms.<sup>13</sup>

The implications of this tendency for spiritual direction will be discussed later. Religious rebellion, or "adolescent heresy," is more often an emotional problem with authority than an authentic intellectual one, and affects boys more than girls.<sup>14</sup>

- (10) The peer group is the most important and influential training institution during the adolescent period.<sup>15</sup> Its effects during this period of growth far outweigh those of the home, church, or school. Its standards and values are the ones adopted by the individual adolescent. Usually these are more or less in conformity with adult standards, but the important point here is that conformity to peer group pressures is what determines their adoption. The implications of this important major finding will be discussed at length in a later section.
- (11) Getting help in the solution of their religious problems is a major continuing problem mentioned by adolescents of all ages.<sup>16</sup>
- (12) There is no developmental trend away from religion or morality during adolescence.<sup>17</sup> Havighurst and Taba conclude in their study on character development in adolescence:

Most of these young people seem to be eager to respond to moral values. Even those who rebel against their environment seem to cherish an inward ideal of desirable conduct. It seems, therefore, that rebellion and bad conduct are usually rooted in causes other than rejection of moral values themselves.<sup>18</sup> Rather, the available empirical data show an increased interest in the meaning of religion for one's personal life and an increased capacity for grasping its significance, along with "a noticeable tendency for religion to become less of a sentimental and emotional affair, and more of an intellectual matter in the transition from childhood to maturity."<sup>19</sup>

It would seem, therefore, legitimate to conclude from the present review of the empirical data that all we need do to further the moral and religious development of the teenager is to ensure that his or her religious experiences during this important formative period are as satisfying and as enriching as we can possibly make them. Education, counseling, and spiritual direction all have important roles to play in the carrying out of this task. My assignment is the role of spiritual direction, and to this we will now turn our attention.

### INDIVIDUAL SPIRITUAL DIRECTION

While noting the distinct possibility of disagreement upon this issue, let us for the purposes of this paper accept the position of many who hold that spiritual direction belongs properly to the category of guidance, as opposed to personality counseling. Father Godin, S.J., for example, indicates that spiritual direction is of a moral and re-educative order seeking no basic modification of the individual's basic personality structure. The concern, he believes, is rather with the modification of conscious and manifest behavior under the influence of religious inspiration. Spiritual direction, he insists, concentrates on actual conflicts and problems of a religious and moral order without involvement in the psychotherapeutic exploration of unconscious processes and developmental influences going back, perhaps, to early childhood. Indeed, few spiritual directors are equipped by training or inclination to engage in such an exploration,<sup>20</sup> nor need they be, in my estimation.

Operationally, then, spiritual direction usually refers to that relationship between a priest and his penitent, in which the priest, by virtue of a more or less systematic application of his training in spiritual theology and through the administration of the sacraments, particularly Penance and the Holy Eucharist, attempts to guide the penitent away from his vices towards a life of even heroic virtue.

Though I am unable to put my hand on any empirical data to confirm this statement, it seems evident that the individual

spiritual direction of most Catholic adolescents will necessarily be conducted in the confessional. Except in unusual circumstances, sheer numbers and the limited time available to most priests for this kind of work outside the confessional seem to dictate this practice.

In view of this, it certainly seems important that adolescents find their experience with the Sacrament of Penance as rewarding and satisfying as possible. Firmness on the part of the confessor certainly has its place, but so do understanding, tact, patience, encouragement, and unfailing kindness. It is interesting and instructive in this context to note that a study conducted in Belgium on adolescent girls and replicated on American minor seminarians by Father Eugene Kennedy, M.M., found that all subjects rated the qualities of understanding and sincerity of priest-directors far higher than even personal abnegation and other qualities that a priest might be expected to possess.<sup>21</sup>

Brief though the confessional contact may be, an understanding response is often sufficient to buoy up a teenager's resolution and courage in his struggles against temptation. How often I have been startled by a boy's audible gasp of relief and quick responsiveness to direction when I have simply said, after listening patiently to his agonized and hesitant recital of sins that have obviously caused him a great deal of shame: "Gee, son, I guess it must have been pretty tough for you to have to face this confession!" The relief he feels over this sort of reception instead of the punishing treatment he obviously had expected is frequently shown in an almost pathetic eagerness to talk over his problem, even outside the confessional if time does not permit an immediate discussion, and a ready willingness to apply the spiritual remedies suggested. The dramatic responses obtained certainly lead me to believe that this kind of understanding, which in no way implies approval of sin, is a great deal more rarely given than one might expect. And is it presumptuous to say that this is a far more Christlike attitude to assume towards the struggling, fearful, and confused adolescent than the verbal lashing to which they seem frequently to be subjected?

In the relatively rare instances when an adolescent (or more frequently an adult) can be seen on a fairly regular

basis for spiritual direction outside the confessional, I personally find a predominantly nondirective approach extremely helpful for the first few interviews. Too often we priests are prone to listen to a person's problems for a matter of mere minutes until we have succeeded in classifying them to our satisfaction according to the book, and then proceed to apply a standard remedy or suggestion for all. I imagine it must feel much the same to the penitent as being diagnosed, categorized, and ministered to by an I.B.M. machine. I was rather amused recently salva reverentia, when I went to a very fine priest who used to be my spiritual director during my cleric years fifteen years ago with a problem similar to the one I had then. Out came the same homily I had heard then, streamlined a little by long use, but almost word for word the same as the one I had heard so often before!

It seems self-evident that a good spiritual physician would want to know as much as possible about the individual patient before him, his conscious "symptoms," his individual aspirations and ideals, his personal style of life, temptations, tendencies, and particular problems, his present level of spiritual development and knowledge, his spiritual inclinations and personal graces. I know no other way of accomplishing this than by listening to the penitent, long and hard, until he and I both feel that we understand fairly well the state of his soul. In a phrase you must have grown sick and tired of hearing by this stage of the workshop, we must endeavor to see the world of the spirit through the penitent's eyes before we dare attempt to apply the appropriate information and specific remedies which he has a right to expect from us as experts trained in the theology of the human spirit.

This, to my mind, is where nondirective techniques have their proper role to play in the difficult art of spiritual direction. I see no other solution, unless the priest-director or spiritual counselor is clairvoyant or has the supernatural gift of "reading hearts."

Thus we might find that one penitent is rather shy, reserved, possessed of a very delicate conscience, sensitive, not given to many social contacts, perhaps gifted with a real contemplative tendency. It would hardly seem suitable to suggest to such a one that he or she become a leader in the

Young Christian Workers, a lay apostle in the foreign missions, or a street-corner orator for the Catholic Evidence Guild. Spiritual reading would be selected for such a one with an eye to minimizing the danger of scrupulosity; the contemplative rather than the social aspects of the liturgy might be stressed; lives of appropriate saints would be chosen according to the intellectual and age level of the penitent. One would even be careful with such a penitent concerning what type of weekend retreat he or she should be exposed to. For the outgoing, action-oriented, more dynamic type of penitent, the kind of spiritual formation offered by a Catholic Action group might be just the thing. Examples could be multiplied endlessly, but the principle remains the same: spiritual direction should be tailored to the individual, and to do this, one must begin as, and remain throughout, a good listener.

As far as the more negative aspects of the individual spiritual direction of the adolescent are concerned, one should realize that certain problems, such as compulsive masturbation, pathological lying, drinking, and severe scrupulosity are not merely moral or religious problems, though obviously they fall into that category too. Since these topics are rather thoroughly covered in the book "Counselling the Catholic" by Fathers Hagmaier and Gleason,<sup>22</sup> I do not propose to cover them in any detail here. Suffice it to say that such severe problems, which involve a general personality disturbance as well as spiritual defects, often require referral to competent professional help. The referral is best made by reinforcing the penitent's anxiety concerning his problem when, after due time, it has become evident that the ordinary means of spiritual direction have been of little avail in aiding him. The conversation at this point might go something like this:

Look, Joe, we've been working on this problem of purity (or scrupulosity, or lying) for a long time now, and we don't seem to be getting anywhere. I know how hard you've tried, but it's still really ruining your life, isn't it? I honestly think we need some extra help on it. I'd like to make an appointment for you with a counselor (or doctor) I know who's worked with me on

problems like this before. I honestly feel I can't help you on all the aspects of it. I'll be more than happy to handle the confession and spiritual side of it, and he can handle the other aspects. How about it?

If the penitent manifests resistance to this suggestion, as often happens, discuss his reasons for this frankly and with understanding until he has worked through his resistance. Emphasize the fact that you will continue to act as his spiritual director; otherwise, he may interpret your referral as rejection. If he does agree to the referral, be prepared to cope with the initial feelings of reluctance and resistance to going on that he brings back to you. These are often characteristic of the beginning of the therapeutic relationship. Presumably you have chosen a therapist whom you know and trust; therefore, never discuss the content of his interviews with the boy, nor the rightness or wrongness, in your estimation, of his approach. By all means, discuss the boy's feelings about going, reassure him that this is frequently the case though you understand how he feels, and urge him to give therapy a fair trial. In your own professional relationship with the therapist, it is seldom necessary to exchange information if he is already acquainted with your general technique in handling such problems. Where confidences are revealed to one another, one must first obviously have the explicit and willing permission of the penitent.

Where adolescents are involved and a fee is requested by the therapist, the permission of the adolescent's parents must often be asked. This is a difficult problem in cases where the deviant behavior is not obvious to the parents; less so otherwise. Sometimes, nothing can be done about this, though at times the proposed therapist might have valuable suggestions to make. It is obvious that no confidences are to be revealed to the parents without the adolescent penitent's ready acquiescence.

### ADOLESCENT IDEALISM

We have seen that empirical data reveal a certain moral

perfectionism on the part of many adolescents. Many adolescents are motivated by extremely high ideals of justice, honesty, and virtue. Good and evil are seen as white and black, with very few variations in between, and this trend is often carried into young adulthood. Extreme demands are made upon self and others, demands which obviously are seldom met. It is indeed pathetic to watch an adolescent's reactions when his or her idols turn out to have feet of clay, or when the personal dreams one has are shattered by repeated failures to measure up to one's ideals. Spiritual direction, whether individual or at least on the group basis to be discussed later, can do much to prevent the cynicism or limp discouragement that often follows such disenchanting experiences.

The role of spiritual direction here is both positive and preventive in nature. The adolescent can and should be taught that he need not abandon his high ideals, provided he settle for the fact that growth and advancement in the spiritual life, as in all aspects of life, are gradual and painful processes, requiring time and long experience. Assure him that even sanctity is possible over the long haul, that he need not pull down his flags; but then proceed to place before him more immediate goals, suited to his individual needs and aspirations, and capable of being reached in a relatively short time. Challenge him to reach them and be firm in your demands. If you have gauged his capacities correctly, he will succeed, and success will spur him on to the next step and the next. Be patient and err on the safe side, recalling frequently to yourself that it usually does take many, many years to acquire heroic virtue and sanctity of life. Be satisfied with very small steps, very small victories, especially at first. We must take a leaf from the behaviorists' book here, and learn that frequent intermittent reinforcement through success is needed for a habit to become firmly entrenched. In working with adolescents in Catholic Action groups, I have seen too many potentially fine leaders in the lay apostolate become discouraged and drop out because they were pushed too hard and too fast by impatient moderators. Unending patience and understanding are again required by the spiritual directors of youth, and it is through this example that they learn how to cope with the inevitable failings they find in others.



## ADOLESCENT RELIGIOUS REBELLION

One further point needs to be explored before we go on to the consideration of group guidance procedures in the spiritual formation of the teenager. This is the phenomenon of "adolescent heresy" previously mentioned in the section on empirical data. The available evidence seems to indicate that this problem is relatively rare, and is found more frequently among boys than girls, who seem to be more tradition-prone on religious matters and less susceptible to certain authority problems. It can safely be said that the majority of religious radicals among teenagers are suffering from emotional problems, rather than intellectual ones. Their radical ideas and statements are generally an extreme but effective way of "getting even" with the demanding and arbitrary authority-figures to whom they have been subject in the past and against whom they finally rebel. Obviously, a further arbitrary appeal to authority only aggravates the condition. Here, too, a nondirective approach is the most effective weapon in the spiritual director's arsenal.

Suppose a rebellious youngster were to say to you: "I hate you priests (or brothers, or sisters)! You're all a bunch of hypocrites!" Most of us, I feel sure, would be tempted to counterattack, "to put that would-be hood in his place," to quote one acquaintance of mine. But suppose we were to reply, with deep interest in trying to understand his point of view and true concern: "You just can't stomach priests (or brothers, or sisters), is that what you mean?" I submit that this type of approach, if maintained consistently, would effectively puncture the balloon of rebelliousness, and lead at least to the admission: "Well, you don't seem to be so bad, anyway." A gap has been opened in hitherto rather impenetrable armor, and you are well on your way towards helping a confused and insecure youngster. Admittedly, it is hard to maintain one's composure under constant attack upon one's most vulnerable and sensitive points of self-esteem. But again an examination of the response suggested indicates that it and others like it in no way express approval of the attitudes expressed, but merely understanding and acceptance of the one who expresses them.

## GROUP SPIRITUAL COUNSELING

Group guidance procedures are being increasingly used in our high schools to supplement and even to substitute for the individual counseling in problems of social, educational, and vocational adjustment which overworked counselors and guidance personnel could not otherwise handle because of limitations of time. Since spiritual direction is also a form of guidance, there seems to be no reason why group methods could not also be employed to meet, at least partially, the same limitations of time and personnel. As a matter of fact, methods for doing just this do exist and are being used in many instances to meet rather effectively the spiritual and moral needs of the developing adolescent. Several illustrations and suggestions along this line will be listed and discussed.

- (1) Spiritual guidance in the classroom. In keeping with the empirical data on adolescent intellectual development and interest in religion, plus the anti-authoritarian bias of this age-group, it is suggested that classroom instruction in religion be supplemented by frequent use of discussion methods. Preferably, adolescent leaders themselves should conduct such discussions, after due preparation of the leaders by the religion teacher or group moderator. In my own experience with such group discussions, initial resistance has been high: "We're not supposed to know anything about this -- you're supposed to tell us. That's your job, isn't it?" However, a little patience and a consistent refusal to be cast into the authoritarian-teacher role are usually rewarded by the fascinating experience of hearing the teenagers discuss the most abstruse doctrines of the Faith in their own language, much as they would a stimulating movie. "Man, I mean it must be fabulous!" was the reaction of one high school girl during a discussion on the Blessed Trinity.

In view of the research evidence already cited, a stress on apologetics at some time during the adoles-

cent years has much to recommend it. With a liberal use of discussion techniques and even role-playing (e.g., as though discussing doctrines of the Faith with non-Catholic acquaintances), one can demonstrate a healthy respect for the greater intellectual capacity of the adolescent and at the same time satisfy his growing curiosity over the meaning of religious doctrines. In these ways an adolescent can be truly challenged to think, provided we do not fall prey to the temptation of destroying their initiative. Catholic school and parish libraries could well be used as discussion-club centers for Catholic public-school teenagers also, and their shelves stocked with appropriate materials.

Religion teachers, of course, should be carefully chosen for their understanding of teenagers. Younger teachers who "get along" with teenagers are especially emulated by them and used in the formulation of their "models," but age is no barrier if understanding is present.

- (2) To offset the phenomenon of decreased church attendance during adolescence, participation of the teenager as fully as possible in the liturgy is strongly recommended. Especially to be commended in this context are the practices of the Dialog Mass, teaching the teenager how to use the missal, the singing of simple Gregorian High Masses, and serving at the altar (for the boys). Demonstrations in religious instruction classes of the parts of the Mass, the administration of the sacraments etc., are also very helpful, especially where the youngsters conduct such demonstrations themselves through role-playing.
- (3) Catholic Action groups and special organizations for the spiritual formation of the young are extremely effective tools of group spiritual guidance, e.g., the Young Christian Students, the Legion of Mary, the Catholic Youth Organization, the various Third Orders with programs adapted to the teenager, the Sodality (if not conducted on a mere mass enrollment basis).

A special word about the Young Christian Students: to my mind, this is the most effective organization we have, psychologically speaking, for fostering the spiritual and religious development of the adolescent. We have seen that one of the major conclusions derived from empirical research on the adolescent is the predominance of the peer group in the determination and adoption of values and standards of conduct.<sup>23, 24</sup> Y.C.S. is expressly and beautifully designed to attack this problem directly. By picking out the real leaders of the peer group as they emerge and training them in Catholic Action ideals and techniques, it influences the entire adolescent sub-culture in the only way it can be influenced. The leaders themselves are formed through individual contact with their moderator or chaplain and through the well-planned series of weekly section meetings, occasional study days, days of recollection, federation, regional and national meetings; and they pass on the ideals of the movement through the natural "teams" they gather around them. In this way, whole neighborhoods, schools or parishes can be dynamically affected in a relatively short period of time. This is the apostolate of "like to like," teenager to teenager, a form of specialized Catholic Action ideally suited to the challenge and problem of the overriding influence of the peer group.

A detailed discussion of Y.C.S. techniques is beyond the scope of this paper. Interested inquirers are directed to the informative literature put out by the national headquarters of the movement.<sup>25</sup> Suffice it to say that Y.C.S. techniques incorporate the best features of the discussion methods and participation in the liturgy previously recommended and that the acts of service performed by the young leaders lead to a growth in supernatural charity and a realization of their Faith which is at times truly astounding. Catholic Action in any form impresses upon the teenager the fact that religion must enter all the spheres of life: social, scholastic, recrea-

tional, vocational, as well as sacramental. Patience is needed to train effective leaders, but after only two years of existence, one Y.C.S. leader's section of my acquaintance contains two girls who plan to become missionary sisters, two who plan to devote some time to the lay apostolate in the foreign missions, one who hopes to devote at least a year after high school to the work of a full-time organizer of the movement in other schools, and others whose spiritual life has been deeply enriched by their experiences. Skilled and patient moderators and chaplains are necessary for the success of the movement, but what a thrill it is to listen to a high school freshman discussing the Mystical Body in his or her own terms, but with adult understanding and appreciation; or, should I say, with an understanding and appreciation seldom achieved by adults!

### CONCLUSION

The spiritual direction of the young can indeed be a rewarding and heartwarming experience for the priest or religious moderator who bases the guidance of the individual or of the group on sound psychological principles. All should be alert to keep abreast of the growing literature in this field. Too many zealous efforts have been doomed to frustration and failure because they were not objectively founded on the data of adolescent psychology. Enough is now known about adolescent religious and moral development to offset the need for trial-and-error, hit-and-miss tactics. We expect adolescents to measure up to the challenge of spiritual growth. As their spiritual guides, therefore, we have the responsibility to inform ourselves concerning their needs and problems and the methods best suited for their satisfaction and solution. Teenagers are wonderful people. If they fail to grow, it is often because we fail them. If they succeed in fulfilling their spiritual potentialities, they in turn will inspire us with their vitality and generosity.

## FOOTNOTES

- <sup>1</sup>D. P. Ausubel, Theory and problems of adolescent development (New York: Grune and Stratton), 1954, p. 268.
- <sup>2</sup>Ibid., op. cit., p. 269.
- <sup>3</sup>Ibid., op. cit., p. 268 ff.
- <sup>4</sup>G. J. Dudycha, "The religious beliefs of college students," J. Appl. Psychol. (1933, 17), 585-603.
- <sup>5</sup>R. G. Kuhlen, The psychology of adolescent development (New York: Harper, 1952), pp. 440 ff.
- <sup>6</sup>Ibid., op. cit., pp. 445.
- <sup>7</sup>Ausubel, op. cit., p. 269.
- <sup>8</sup>Ibid., op. cit., p. 270.
- <sup>9</sup>Ibid., op. cit., pp. 265 ff.
- <sup>10</sup>Kuhlen, op. cit., p. 434.
- <sup>11</sup>A. A. Schneiders, Personality development and adjustment in adolescence (Milwaukee: Bruce, 1960), pp. 303 ff.
- <sup>12</sup>Ibid., op. cit., p. 305.
- <sup>13</sup>Ausubel, op. cit., p. 252.
- <sup>14</sup>Ibid., op. cit., p. 270.
- <sup>15</sup>Ibid., op. cit., pp. 341 ff.
- <sup>16</sup>Kuhlen, op. cit., p. 448.
- <sup>17</sup>Schneiders, op. cit., p. 331.
- <sup>18</sup>R. J. Havighurst and H. Taba, Adolescent character and personality (New York: Wiley, 1949).
- <sup>19</sup>Schneiders, op. cit., p. 331.
- <sup>20</sup>J. F. Kinnane and C. F. Tageson, "Psychology can serve religious life," Homiletic and Pastoral Review (61, No. 4), 346.
- <sup>21</sup>E. C. Kennedy, "The seminary faculty member: the seminarian's view," Amer. Eccles. Review (142, No. 6), 390-398.
- <sup>22</sup>G. Hagmaier and R. W. Gleason, Counselling the Catholic (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1959).
- <sup>23</sup>Ausubel, op. cit., pp. 341 ff.
- <sup>24</sup>W. J. Smith, "Religious and moral development in adolescence," Catholic Educ. Review (56, No. 9), 592.
- <sup>25</sup>National Headquarters, Young Christian Students, 1700 West Jackson Blvd., Chicago 12, Illinois.

PART II

APPENDICES





## APPENDIX A

### SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

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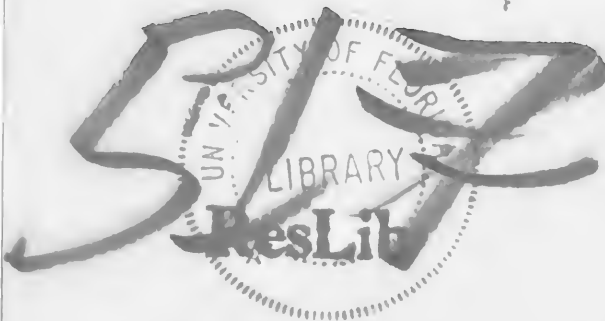
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